

Queer-Edge Excerpts: How a Chance Zine Encounter Became a Call to Sobriety

brokenpencil

THE MAGAZINE OF ZINE CULTURE AND THE INDEPENDENT ARTS

THE
MANDALORIAN
MERCs:
Anti-Corporate
Cosplay & the DIY
Multiverse

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PODCAST
ACTIVIST:
I AM WOMAN,
HEAR ME
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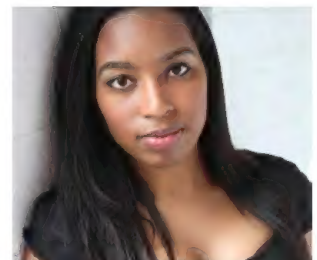
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Sami Alwani is a cartoonist and illustrator living in Toronto, Ontario. See more of his work at samialwani.com.



Autumn Crossman-Serb is an illustrator/graphic novelist based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has created several original comics and zines, including a reworked fairy tale based on Straggletag. Most of her stories are niche romances set in sci-fi and fantasy worlds. When not writing or drawing, she is working on her stand-up routines and doing the local comedy festival circuit.



Fiona Raye Clarke is a Trinidadian-Canadian lawyer, writer, playwright, and community artist. She holds a Master of Laws from Osgoode Hall Law School and is currently the Operations Manager at MABELLEarts. She is also the editor of the forthcoming anthology *Black Like We: Troubleshooting the Black Youth Experience*, which was a past ArtReach Youth Arts Pitch Contest winner.

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IT'S PRETTY SURREAL to be writing this letter to you, oh *Broken Pencil* reader. It's strange mostly because I still consider myself a *Broken Pencil* reader, too.

I've been following zines, political publishing, independent creators and the spaces that bring them together since I was just a little teenager, picking up fanzines at punk shows in Philly, and making my first cut-n-pastes in my suburban bedroom. Still today, I find myself blown away by the limitless possibilities of self-publishing and artists who do it for themselves. With every issue of *Broken Pencil*, I find out about a new project, phenomenon, or political orientation I hadn't considered. So I'm excited, if a bit bewildered, to be able to nourish the work that nourishes me.

Whether it's at a zine fair, a festival, a show, a reading, or within the pages of this magazine, I always get energy from seeing artists offer their work to others. As the new editor of *Broken Pencil*, I want to tap into that sense of wonder I feel every time I read the mag, pick up a new zine, check out a new venue, or hear from a creator on the other side of the world. And I want to share it.

If you don't know me by now, here's a little about me. I've been working at *BP* as an assistant editor for three years. At the same time, I've been helping lead projects at Making Room Community Arts, making zines, books, and celebrations with different community groups in Parkdale and around the city. I've also been making zines, both collaborative and my own, with a project called Gay 4 Pay Press. Amidst all this, I've learned more and more about festivals, not only helping organize Canzine in Toronto and Winnipeg, but also working at the Toronto Comic Arts Festival, the Lakes International Comic Art Festival in the UK, and Naked Heart, Toronto's LGBTQ Festival of Words.



As stoked as I am about giving back to the arts community I adore, I'm constantly reminded the arts and their platforms don't simply exist in some neutral vacuum. Underground publishing, identity-based cultural production, DIY as an ethos, alternative community building and the protection of undervalued artistic traditions are all political as fuck. As nice as festivals and magazines are, if we're not grappling with the way that systemic power imbalances, racial and gender hierarchies, and so many interlocking oppressions create barriers for some of our most talented artists, then we're not doing it right. It's a conversation I'm always revisiting with so many artists and so many of my peers, not the least of whom is the brilliant and thoughtful outgoing editor Alison Lang, to whom I owe untold amounts of gratitude.

Because of these systemic inequalities, my goals for the future *Broken Pencil* were always to give resources to marginalized voices, provide a platform for political art, and double down on our commitment to equity. But recent events and conversations — from Trump's vitriol,

to the ongoing anti-Black racism in the queer community surrounding me, to the loud and resilient voices challenging cultural appropriation and settler colonialism in the moment of Canada 150 — have intensified my conviction. These issues have challenged me to listen in more critical, less defensive, and more action-oriented ways to the people most affected by inequalities in publishing, the art world, and our fucked up society at large. And with such a big task before me, I feel grateful for those critical voices demanding that all of us commit, like, *really* commit to doing the work.

So I'm asking you, *Broken Pencil* reader, and I'm asking *Broken Pencil's* broader community of weirdos, artists, queers, rebels with all of our intersections of experience, to continue to hold the magazine — and continue to hold me — to task as we continue to bring you the best in underground arts. It matters to me more than anything, and I can't wait to see what we can do together. Thank you.

Jonathan Valeyly

Letters and Misc

Subs <subs@brokenpencil.com>
to Hal, Alison, Colin, me, Ian

May 8

Knock Knock
Who's there?
Broken Pencil
Broken Pencil who?
Forget it. This joke is pointless!

PLEASE REVIEW THIS

Title: THE WRITE OR Die Zine Project Poetry, Prose & Condiz Vol. II
Creator's Name / Nom De Plume: THE Papyrus Collective (papeo)
Ordering Address: South Chicago APL DISTRO
City: Box 724 Homewood State: IL Zip: 60430
Email: anthonyrayson@hotmail.com
Website: Between the Bars.org/group/papyrus collective OR Just Search Papeo
Include Email / Website in This Review? Yes ☒ No ☐

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To America:

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To Europe / Other:

Is it available for trade? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is it free to prisoners? Yes ☒ No ☐

Available on cassette / CD? Yes ☐ No ☐ seeking to create an Audio Link.

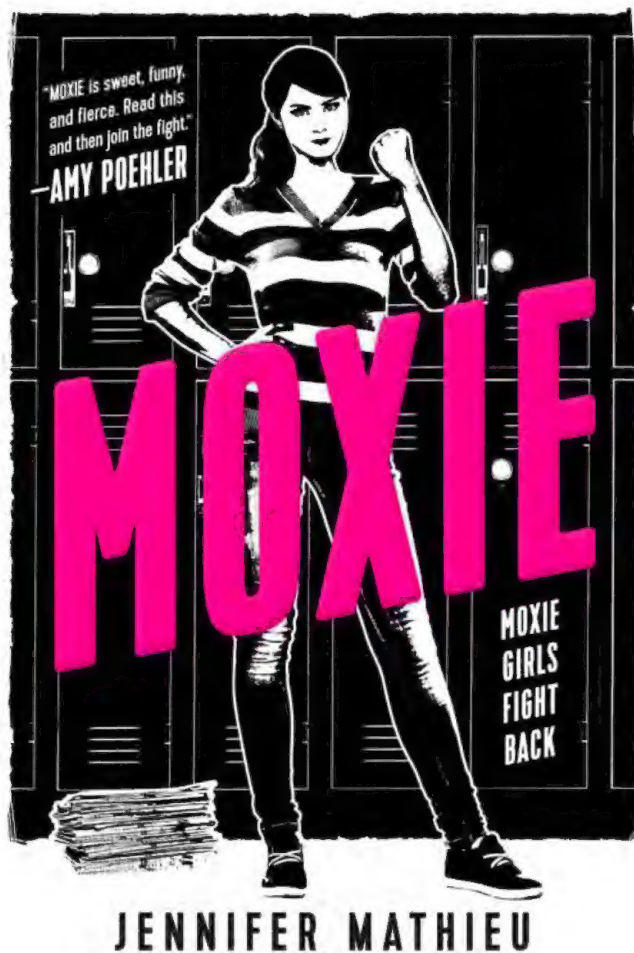
Statement of legal age required? Yes ☐ No ☒

Anything Else We Should Know? This is the first all handwritten zine from papeo, also looking for someone to send a phone number to call and record these and other works recited by a new generation on California death row to create a new audio link feature, collect calls only from prisoners, details to be worked out by contacting Gobel Tel Link.com, to receive prison calls,
Notes:

For direct contact, please go to:
between the bars.org/blogs/1916/Byron Wilson
leave a comment at Poetry, Prose & Condiz Vol. II
state your interest, and enjoy viewing the many
excerpts from book issues of The Write OR Die Zine Project

This issue was created to say thank you to NIS Bell for
reinstating The Creative Writing Group for Condemned
captives in California, after years of program cancellations
that caused a plethora of hardships within the
condemned population.

Thank You for Your attention
-Xayzot



She's Got Moxie

Young adult fiction has picked up on social justice issues in the past couple years. Yet even though teenagers are again being introduced to zines as an outlet of rebellion, there has yet to be a rad YA book that includes the genre. Until now.

Enter *Moxie* by high school teacher and former zinester Jennifer Mathieu. *Moxie* is the fictional story of Vivian Carter, a 16-year-old who starts a zine that sparks a feminist revolution in her conservative southern high school. This is the book that crafty feminists (of any age) have been waiting for.

Vivian, though demure and rule-respecting, has always been fascinated with her mom's riot grrrl past, which lives on in a keepsake box. But an anger inside Vivian is unleashed by the disgusting actions of boys in her high school (and the teachers that protect them). Vivian creates the zine *Moxie* (while blasting Bikini Kill, naturally) and anonymously drops them off in girls washrooms. Her first issue — and yes, they're included in the book! — sparks a school-wide underground education on privilege, sexism and misogyny. And it gets better from there, as different girls take ownership of what *Moxie* represents, with their tag line "Moxie girls fight back!"

"I want teenagers, especially young women," says Mathieu, "to walk away from reading *Moxie* knowing that life as a feminist is a joyful, wonderful way to live." (Jessica Lewis)

Moxie is out September 19 via Roaring Brook Press.

STAFF PICK

Cook Korean!

Comic Book cook book

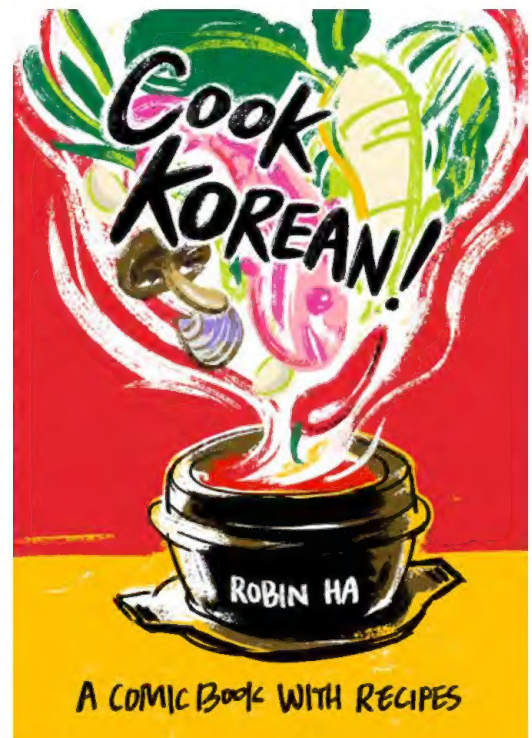
Earlier this year, the Korean boyband Bangtan Boys (BTS) won for Top Social Artist at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards. Immediately, super racist responses to their win surfaced on social media. Yikes!

My response to this mess? Search for and recommend good introductions to Korean culture, which is why Robin Ha's *Cook Korean!* is my staff pick.

Robin's comic cookbook not only introduces us to Korean cuisine, but makes the adventure totally not scary and welcomes the uninitiated into an inner circle of cultural awakening. Aimed at non-Korean readers, the cookbook allows those of us with little to no experience try our hands at a huge range of Korean staples. If you're a fan of Korean cooking, there are a few fan favourites like kimchi and pan-fried tofu, but also not-so-familiar dishes like watermelon soju.

Robin balances her crisp writing with delicious illustrations and easy-to-follow, step-by-step instructions. In her fantastic chapter introductions, she shares personal anecdotes, the history of each dish, and some of the food's cultural significance. Robin guides us through Korean cooking and culture from a perspective where we are all welcome to her dinner table. (Jean Mathew)

Jean Mathew is an editorial assistant at Broken Pencil.



BOMBAY UNDERGROUND

Zine fairs are popping up like daisies, and it's awesome! Recently, *BP* caught wind of a new series of zine events in India thrown by a collective of artists called Bombay Underground. In January 2017, the first ever Bombay Zine Fest was held in Mumbai (Bombay), bringing together a large volume of self-published books and zines for the public for the first time in India, followed by a travelling exhibition of zines called "You Deserve to DIY."

"There is a rich history of self-publishing in India. Various social justice movements often make easily distributable small publications," explained Aqui, one of the organizers. "[But] I think the first people in Bombay to actually make zines and hustle them in the streets was Bombay Underground."

While every zine scene is unique, the power of zines described by BU's members might resonate with other creators worldwide. "Coming from a single parent, low-income family background, zines became a super awesome medium to be able to make something, make multiples of it, and spread it to many others," reflected Himanshu, another organizer. "In the process, I made friends with similar-minded people, finding solidarity."

You can find them on Facebook at [@bombayunderground](#) and on Instagram at [@dharaviartroom](#). (Jonathan Valelly)



Vivek Shraya gives writers a path through barriers with VS. Books

Toronto's unstoppable Vivek Shraya — superstar musician, prolific writer, and committed force of community-building — has done it again. In partnership with Arsenal Pulp Books, a press that continually shows itself committed to social justice, Shraya is launching the imprint VS. Books.

VS. Books — which, as you can tell by its name, is proudly against the grain — will be driven by a mentorship project Shraya launched last year, meant to give opportunities to young writers who are Indigenous, Black or people of colour. Now, this program comes paired with a publishing contract.

As she enters her 15th year as a professional artist, Shraya writes that she's been reflecting "on the kinds of supports I required in the first decade of my career to push through systemic barriers in relation to cultural production in Canada."

In recognition of those barriers, Shraya shaped her mentorship program to fill the void of support young writers need and crave.

The program's application deadline is September 15, 2017. Along with a publishing contract for a book release in Spring 2019, the successful applicant will receive an abundance of feedback, and a guiding hand throughout the publishing, grant-writing and promotion process. Check out [vivekshraya.com/vsbooks](#) to apply. (Anisa Rawhani)

ART HOLES

Creators diagram where they work



This is an illustration of all the places I draw: my bed, my couch, and basically every coffee shop Winnipeg has.

Autumn Crossman-Serb is an illustrator/graphic novelist based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has created several original comics and zines, including a reworked fairy tale based on Straggetag. Most of her stories are niche romances set in sci-fi and fantasy worlds. When not writing or drawing, she is working on her stand-up routines and doing the local comedy festival circuit. See her work at autumngrace.carbonmade.com

THE SMELL OF OUR OWN
The artist in the family

Sami Alwani and his mother, Ghada



FROM MY ADOLESCENCE studying writing, to my years in art school, my parents and family have always enthusiastically supported my career as an artist — even when they don't fully understand the work I'm making. My comics range from the political to the sexually deviant to the highly personal and occasionally controversial. With this in mind, it was enlightening for my mother and I to have an opportunity to sit down together, and for me to answer her questions about my art, much of which touches on our shared experiences as a family.

Ghada Alwani: How did your family affect you as a human, and as an artist?

Sami Alwani: I think for my personality I took a lot from both you and Dad. Dad is really intellectual and booksmart, and I think in that sense my work as an artist is really detailed and technical. Whereas you are very empathic and social. You're very good at understanding people and you have a very strong intuition. So I think with the two of those things combined, I was able to think in technically complicated ways, but then also step back and be able to see the larger picture, and bring a more in-depth emotional understanding of people into my work.

GA: What are you trying to convey with your art, and what do you hope to contribute to the world with it?

SA: When I am choosing what I want to make work about I often write about things that are bothering me about the

world we live in. A lot of the time people just keep doing this annoying thing and I really want them to stop, so I choose to write about those issues. If I have a strained relationship with my family, or if I feel alienated from society, or if I can't find work in a failing economy and I have no prospects because society doesn't value the work of artists... those are all things that bug me, but instead of focusing on my individual circumstances, I try to relate those things back to the larger social constructs that created those problems. So I take the symptom of the illness that I'm experiencing personally and relate it back to its source, what the illness really is. I think a lot of the time it's about the way we think, our ideology.

GA: What is your writing process like? What inspires you when it comes to your ideas?

SA: A lot of the time my stories for my comics come to me in a very weird way. I

don't think its how people are traditionally taught to write. I get a lot of things in bits and pieces, like a collage before anything is assembled into a narrative. I'll take influences from a lot of the artwork I'm reading or seeing, and as I'm processing that I come up with little phrases and fragments and try to be fastidious about writing them all down. Eventually the fragments almost start to organize themselves into a narrative. Then afterwards, there's a lot of editing where I assemble them all so they're cohesive. I don't mind if there's a bit of a staccato or disjointed rhythm to it. I think that's interesting in the pacing sometimes. Doing it this way really frees me up. Everything is laid out in front of me in a very free form way and it's much simpler for me to take those pieces and put them in the right order.

More about Sami's work at samialwani.com.

POWER UP! INDIE GAMES

Purity & Decay

by Al Donato

Who killed Merriam LaPensee? The question looms over *Purity & Decay*, a visual cyber-noir novel by Achimostawinan Games. But by asking one question, the game's creators also ask another: What does an Indigenous future look like seven generations from now?

Let's get this out of the way: Noir, as a genre, is white. The genre's silver screen sleuths were typically hard-boiled in heady broths of French cynicism, German aesthetics, and American post-war masculinity. Their world-weary individualistic outlooks legitimized themselves through monochromatic monologues afflicted with metaphors and misogyny. *Purity & Decay* fixes noir's shortcomings by decolonizing the whodunit.

Private eye Myeengun Hill, bemoaner of soggy bannock and rich girls, is as cynical as they come. He's hired by Mary LaPensee, a wealthy dame looking for answers into her runaway sister's grisly demise. Mary is woefully unaware of how people live below — *literally* below, since in this world of holographic news alerts and hyper-advanced drugs, the elites are sky people, living high above those in the slums.

The noir hallmarks are all there: cryptic clues, sinister forces and broken systems that our Myeengun sidesteps. But while so much detective fiction orbits around what's wrong with the individual, *Purity & Decay* examines how personal faults are related to social issues. In this future, colonial trauma is just beginning to heal. Things are improving, but nothing is utopic. Queer relationships are in the game, but so is a drug that makes you straight. Stratification abounds: Mary for one is completely unaware of the existence of social services like housing assistance.

Developer and Achimostawinan founder Meagan Byrne thus channeled her distress in capitalism and colonialism into the visual novel. She re-frames social issues like homelessness, taking issue with how victims of the housing crisis are usually interpreted a failing individual, not a complex person deserving of compassion.

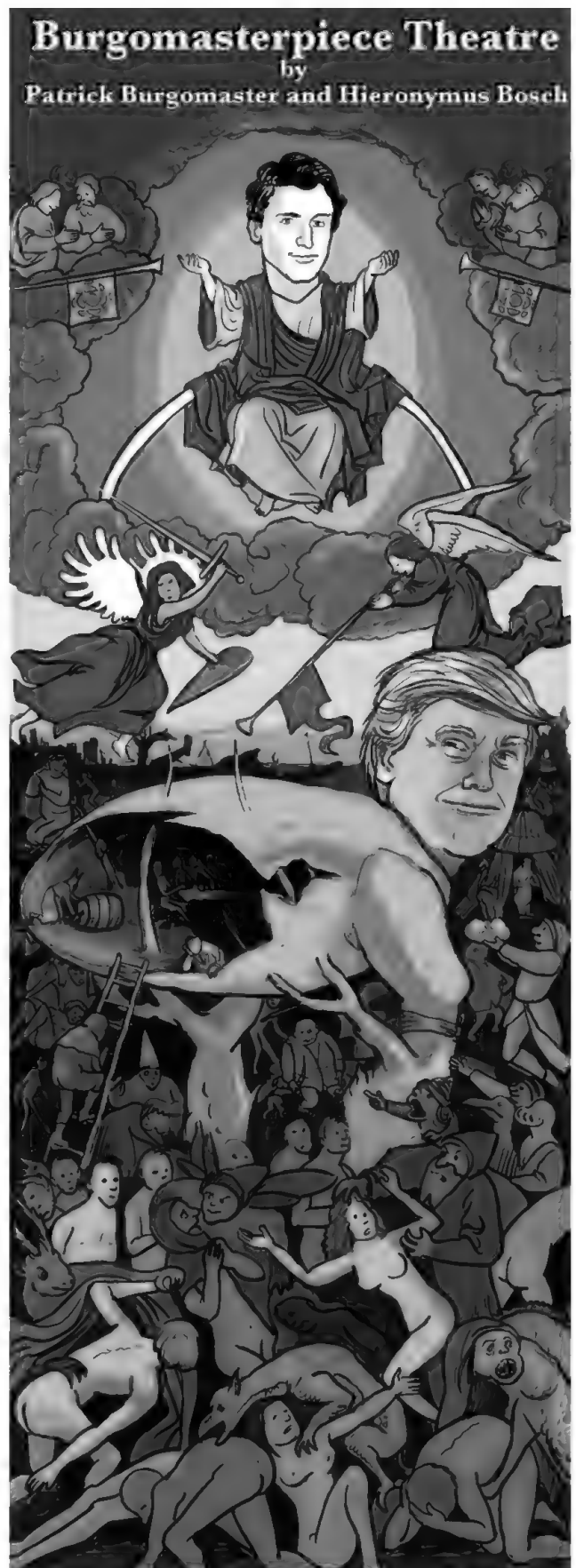
"We're used to seeing things through a colonial lens of what's ok, what's good," Byrne says. "I was thinking, what's a world like with less lateral violence?"

Byrne is Métis and Cree, and the game was illustrated by Tara Miller of Maliseet First Nation. *P&D* only portrays the creators' specific nations, a conscious push against cultural appropriation, an open wound that Canada is fond of scratching, with a deep graze done recently by the publisher of this very magazine.

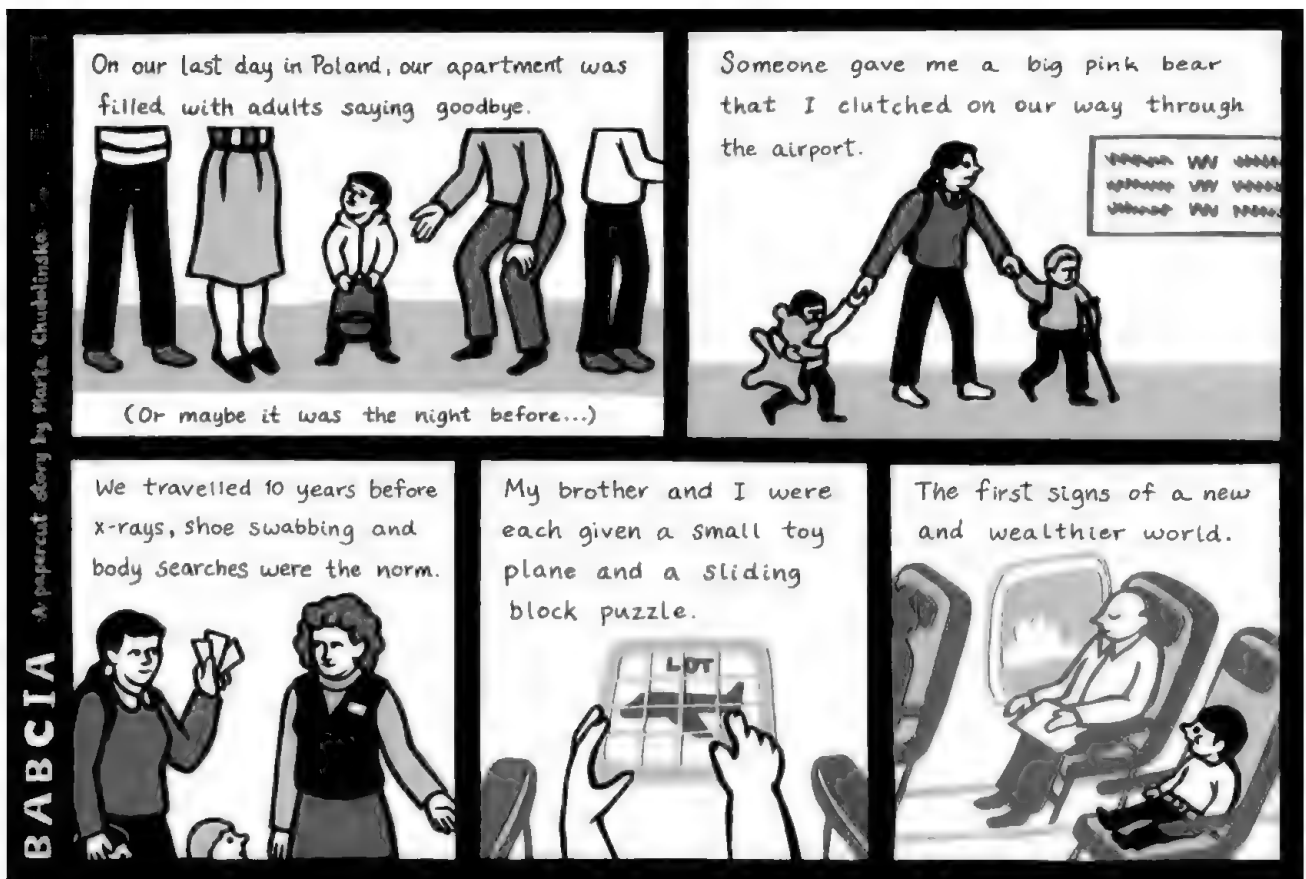
As such, the sacredness of storytelling weighs heavy on Byrne's creative process. She worries about taking without giving something back. After all, theft isn't only exploitative. It affects Indigenous youth on the margins and those detached from their communities.

Noir's typical "I got mine" attitude is not the Cree way, Byrne says. In imagining an Indigenous noir with *Purity and Decay*, Byrne and her team have also swapped the genre's self-protective ideology for something kinder and more patient: "I got you."

Purity & Decay is in development. You can play the first chapter at byrneout.itch.io/purity-decay

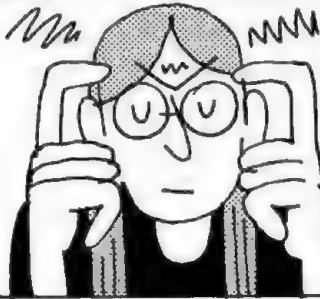


Comics



EDGIE INDIENERT BY SOPHIE VANDW

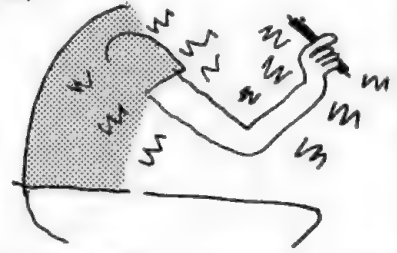
MOVING DRAWING TO THE FRONT OF MY MIND.



FINALLY FOUND TOOLS THAT MAKE RESULTS I LIKE, BUT SPARE MY BODY.



REALIZED I'D BEGUN TO ASSOCIATE COMICS WITH PAIN.



I WANT TO WAKE UP AND CRAVE DRAWING...



GO TO BED AND LOOK FORWARD TO ANOTHER DAY...



LIVING HALF IN THIS WORLD AND HALF IN THE OTHER.



L. VANDW '17

WHAT IS ANTIFA?

BY GORD HILL



ANTI-FA STANDS FOR ANTI-FASCIST ACTION (AFA).

ANTI-FA BEGAN IN GERMANY IN THE 1930S IN RESPONSE TO THE NAZI MOVEMENT.



IT WAS ORGANIZED BY THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND WAS BANNED IN 1933.

IN THE 1980S, ANTIFA WAS REBORN AS PART OF THE AUTONOMIST MOVEMENT IN WEST GERMANY...



THESE GROUPS HAD NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY OR FORMAL LEADERS BUT COORDINATED TOGETHER.

SOON, ANTIFA GROUPS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN NUMEROUS WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES...



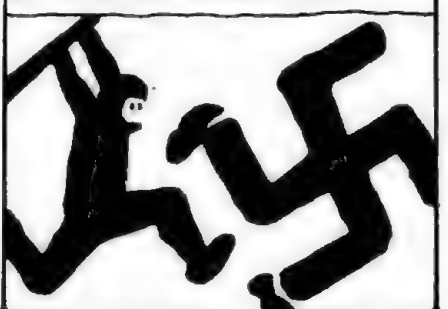
ALONG WITH PROTESTS AND DIRECT ACTIONS, ANTIFA GATHERED INTEL ON FASCISTS AND PROMOTED ANTI-RACIST AND ANTIFA CULTURE.

WHAT UNITED MOST ANTIFA GROUPS WAS THE BELIEF THAT FASCISTS HAD TO BE CONFRONTED PHYSICALLY + IDEOLOGICALLY.



AND DENIED ANY PLATFORM FROM WHICH TO ORGANIZE + PROPAGATE THEIR IDEAS.

TODAY, ANTIFA GROUPS ARE GROWING IN THE U.S. IN RESPONSE TO THE "ALT-RIGHT" AND A RESURGENCE OF HATE GROUPS IN "TRUMP'S AMERICA"...





Katie Jensen fights
for inclusivity and
access in Canadian
media and music

Kristel Jax

Photography by Lindsay Duncan



IT'S APRIL 2107. I'm at Katie Jensen's Inclusive Podcast Workshop series where, surrounded by strangers, I'm holding back a panic attack. Yet Katie's ultra-friendly voice and casual bless-this-mess, we're-all-in-this-together vibe is so soothing, and her enthusiasm for the medium is so infectious, that I start to chill out and believe I can survive three hours of this, especially after a round of introductions.

The all-women class is brimming with intriguing, challenging program ideas on topics ranging from Canadian history to disability to women in music. Part of Katie's inclusivity mandate has meant PWYC workshop participants have paid as little as \$5, or received full sponsorship.

We each write a script and make a demo, and when mine is played out loud the class, everyone, especially Katie, is enthusiastic and supportive. I'd arrived with the vague idea that podcasting is an important skill for a journalist, and I leave dedicated to turning my niche podcast idea into an iTunes reality. That night, I get an email from Katie that ends: "What next?! What can I do to help make this pod real?"

In the four years since Scarborough-born Katie Jensen moved from Hamilton to Toronto, her name has become associated with too many local and national cultural phenomena to name. She's currently a journalist, podcaster, producer, musician, promoter, blogger, activist, Twitter essayist, and now instructor. She's heavily involved with Toronto DIY music, art, and the culinary event Feast in the East, which just celebrated its sixth year. She also freelances for a series she inspired, PlusPlusPodcast, and will produce podcasts for the 2017 Polaris Music Prize. She writes and curates for the aptly named blog *Weird Canada*, plays in the dark-wave band Baby Cages, runs her blog *Music Between Friends*, and programs Indie-licious, a radio show on 93.3 CFMU at McMaster University. Yet, Katie seems at ease managing her myriad projects, tying them, and the people around her, together seamlessly with the common threads of tireless dedication and integrity.

In a city of rising rents and increasing precarity for artists, belief can be hard to come by. When Katie tells me about her own lifelong struggles with generalized anxiety and OCD (she was diagnosed at age eight), the generosity of her enthusiasm begin to make sense: this is an artist who's mastered the tricky dichotomy of needing to ask others for help to make it on her own.

Katie and I chatted about media, DIY, music, inclusivity, mental health, and *just doing the thing*. Our conversation has been edited for length.



"I'D RATHER TALK ABOUT MUSIC THAT EVOKES IMAGINERY. THERE'S AN ELECTRIC GUITAR PART WITH A LOT OF FUZZ AND DISTORTION AND PENETRATING SOUND. I'D RATHER TALK ABOUT IT SOUNDING LIKE A CHIPPED TOOTH BEING DRAGGED OVER METAL. SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU FEEL WITHIN AN UNCOMFORTABLE THE WORDS ARE."

You've become super engaged in different Toronto communities since you moved here four years ago. How did that happen?

Pretty gradually. [At first] I had this corporate job, a place in Parkdale, and had just been dumped by this guy, who was the first person I'd met who was an artist — I was like, "Oh wait, people can make money and call themselves artists? You don't have to be ashamed of calling yourself an artist?" I'd thought calling yourself an artist or musician had this sense of embarrassment.

Where do you think that came from?

Probably from myself. I'd made the choice to go into science and de-prioritize music. I'm the first person in my family to go to university — everyone else is a tradesperson. But everyone's incredibly artistically gifted. No one ever said, "No, you shouldn't be pursuing music." It was just like, "we do these other jobs, and on the holidays we get together and play in our family band or whatever."

So, you're in Parkdale, and you just got dumped.

I was really sick at the time, and I was feeling pretty low. I saw a concert listing for a band called Mimico [at] Feast in the East. I'd never really been on the east end of town. So, I layered myself up and had all these Kleenexes and Halls stuffed in my pockets, and I went to Gerrard Art Space by myself, and maybe New Fries was playing — whoever was playing really took me aback. I saw Tad [Michaluk] and Neil [Rankin] sitting at the door, in the little kitchen this guy was serving bowls of mushrooms, noodles, and delicious greens; women were selling glasses of wine; there was art everywhere. There was an amazing positive energy in the room.

As I left, I caught the eye of [Tad] at the door again. My friend was coming to pick me up and I remember saying to her, "I feel like I've gotta talk to that guy at the door," but I didn't. The next day I messaged him and said, "I had so much fun last night. I'd love to help," and he said, "Okay, let's meet for coffee." So, we met at Ideal in Kensington and the minute he walked in the door, I just knew we would be talking for hours.

We started doing Feast in the East together — he'd already been doing it for three years at that point with Neil Rankin and Cameron Lee.

(After linking up with Feast in the East, Katie was invited to start writing for Canadian music blog Weird Canada) What was it like to start music blogging?

I have a trademark style when I write about music. I can write about technical things, but I'd rather talk about music that evokes imagery. If there's an electric guitar part with a lot of fuzz and distortion and penetrating sound, I'd rather talk about it sounding like a chipped tooth being dragged over metal. Something that makes you feel with how uncomfortable the words are. It makes it easier for people who don't come from a musical background to understand what the music might sound like.

You carry this accessibility over to your work in broadcasting. How did you get into podcasting?

When I moved to Toronto, I was still doing my radio show *Indie-licious*, and thought, I'm pre-recording it anyway so throwing it up on iTunes is simple. Standards were very low back then for a podcast. I was using a RockBand microphone — like RockBand the game!

How did you transition from doing your own podcasts to working on other people's?

I was getting stagnant at the corporate job I had, and I was dating someone very creative, and I thought, if not now when? Then I went to Jesse Brown, (the host) of *Canadaland*, and said, "Here's why I think you need me as an intern. These are the episodes I like; these are the episodes I didn't like. Here's what I think you can do to improve the quality of your sound, format, and x, y, z." And he said, "Cool, come in for an interview in a week and bring pitches." The next day he hired me, and I worked there for two years.

You seem to have this intense belief that you can just do things. Where do you think that comes from?

My dad! We're basically the same person. We have similar mental health issues and he's also super autodidactic: he's had a million different trades, he's a gifted artist, he can pretty much pick up any instrument and figure it out. Being the oldest, I got to do all these things with him, and just decided, "Oh, it can't be that hard."

How has experiencing mental health issues from such a young age informed the choices you make now?

I saw a psychologist when I was eight, but when I was 18 I started having panic attacks and obsessive thoughts. Being given such good mental health care when I was eight did two things: it made me less afraid of asking for specific help, and I knew how good treatment could be. So when I didn't get good therapy on campus, I knew to stop and seek it elsewhere.

You're also a very empathetic person. Where does that empathy come from?

Living in Toronto and having incredible women of colour checking me really helped me think of people who don't look like me

— people who are often neglected, unacknowledged.

That became a priority for me when I saw the examples made by journalists of colour. Seeing their anger, feeling angry for them, and thinking that I have so much privilege, I should try to do everything in my power to fight for people. I became a much stronger feminist when I started listening to women of colour.

The Inclusive Podcast Workshop format seems like a natural reaction to these experiences. When did you first have the idea for the series?

I think it was late at night. I was like, "I'm just gonna put this tweet out and gauge interest." Within a half hour it had 20 retweets or something, and all these journalists were sharing it. I'd specifically tagged people of colour because I wanted to make sure that since this workshop is targeting people of colour, artists, and low-income people, that it didn't have that algorithmic glom-on of white people just liking it. I tried to spread it out as much as I could.

I'm at the point now where more than 130 people have signed up to be in upcoming workshops.

Why was your first priority to make the podcast workshop inclusive, and to reach out beyond your bubble?

A \$20 workshop is simply not affordable for some people. I also took a lot of care to make sure all my branding went through a person of colour, I wanted to make sure someone else looked at it.

All these major podcasts are mostly hosted by people who are white, middle class, come from a journalistic background. [I hope] I can crack that open a tiny bit and say, "Hey, it's easy, and you're just as important and deserve to be heard." I try to convey that in my workshop. White men have been told they belong places and they deserve things, we have to tell [other] people that they belong and they deserve things.

Speaking of outsider and often marginalized backgrounds, why is a DIY approach important to you?

DIY scenes give you a place to fail without huge pressure, because when there's a formalized institution scrutinizing you — or high stakes where you're investing a lot of money — you get fewer chance. With DIY, you can play your first show in a small setting with relatively low costs to the people running the space, and relatively low cost to the audience.

DIY spaces are a fertile ground in which to develop as an artist, make connections with other emerging artists, and build a more inclusive and supportive community. When you go to a DIY space, you might stand next to someone who's a visual artist or a performance artist and not a musician, you can get to talking, and maybe you do a project together down the line. It's a forgiving and encouraging space, everyone's doing a lot with very little, and you can get very creative with the restrictions placed on you when you have no money. ☺

***Full disclosure: Aside from taking Katie Jensen's podcast workshop, Kristel Jax has performed on show and festival bills alongside Jensen's band, *Baby Cages*.



BLACK & QTPOC ARTISTS

(RE)CLAIMING SPACE

by Fiona Raye Clarke

"IT'S EASIER to program and create things when you don't have to worry about what someone thinks about what you're doing in their space," says Karen Carter of BAND. Whether they're facing off with racist landlords, a hostile arts world, or the indie music scene, these four groups of Black artists and artists of colour are carving out spaces, and making headlines doing it.

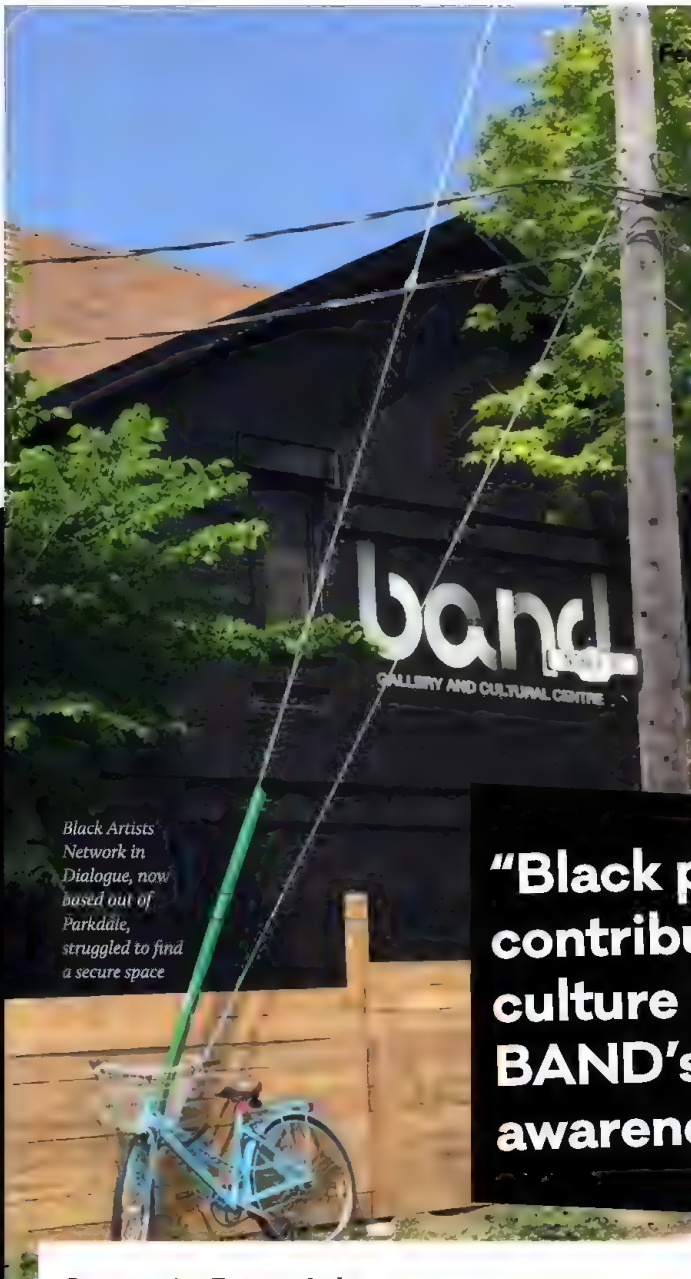
Black Artists' Network in Dialogue (Toronto, ON)

In 2009, Toronto-based cultural worker Karen Carter, along with Maxine Bailey, Karen Tyrell and Julie Crooks, founded an organization that would create opportunities for Black artists called

Black Artists' Network in Dialogue (BAND). Starting out with pop-up events, BAND eventually partnered with TD Bank for Black History Month leading them to create a formal organization with staff and dedicated space.

"Black people in Canada have contributed significantly to the culture in this country," observes Carter, "Part of BAND's mandate is to raise awareness of those contributions through programming." Despite these contributions, and the fact that "we live in a society and a city that purports to be one of the most diverse in the world," says Carter, the city doesn't create space for those diverse voices to be present. BAND has encountered numerous difficulties securing space amidst Toronto's racist real estate climate.

When BAND was being forced to relocate from its previous location, it had trouble securing space due to "landlords not



wanting to have Black artists in their space,” explains Carter. They decided to seek help from a bank to purchase a \$800,000 space in Parkdale, a part of Toronto where poor, disabled, and newcomer residents are being rapidly displaced. BAND’s new home opened in April.

“As a Black cultural organization” says Carter, “we wanted space to program...with the cultural voice we wanted to do it with.” He adds, “It’s easier to program and create things when you don’t have to worry about what someone thinks about what you’re doing in their space.”

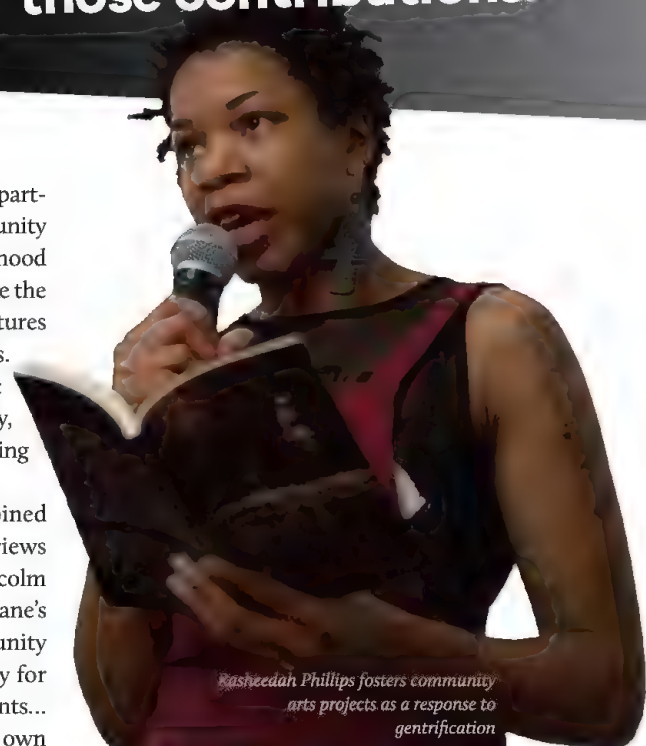
For BAND, that space, and its voice, is to show that Black people “are not monolithic. We are diverse people, we come from all over the world, have diverse perspectives, diverse positions, and our artists are as diverse as the regions... we come from.” Their current show, *Ears, Eyes, Voice: Black Canadian Photojournalists 1970s–1990s* is part of the Scotiabank Contact Festival and runs until August 13. The show demonstrates the breadth of that spectrum including images of Hollywood talent coming to town to pageants, protests, and people on the streets of Toronto.

“Black people in Canada have contributed significantly to the culture in this country. Part of BAND’s mandate is to raise awareness of those contributions.”

Community Futures Lab

When North Philadelphia’s (Philadelphia, PA) Norman Blumberg high-rise apartments were demolished in 2016, Rasheedah Phillips saw the need and opportunity to secure space for the Black communities that had long called the neighbourhood home. In 2011, Phillips started the Afrofuturist Affair. The project seeks to make the concept of Afrofuturism — a movement composed of images of alternate futures for Black and Afro-diasporic peoples — accessible to low-income individuals. After being awarded a fellowship from A Blade of Grass, Phillips and artistic collaborator Camea Ayewa opened the Community Futures Lab in North Philly, which looks at space holistically and intersectionally, and “stretches... the meaning of art” says Phillips, “so that it’s part of the everyday community.”

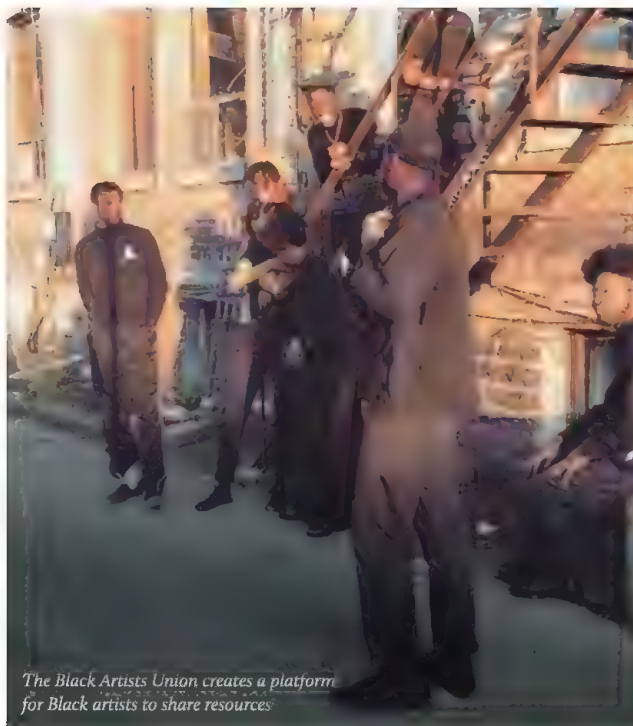
Programs include workshops such as “Housing Futures,” which combined presentations about housing rights with artmaking, and oral history interviews where residents shared memories of the neighbourhood, including that Malcolm X stayed there for six months, and that it was once the location of John Coltrane’s house. The Lab also has also created a community gallery, in which community members contribute artwork and stories and has created “the opportunity for people to challenge the narrative of what Blackness is and what Blackness wants... especially for low-income people... and privilege their own memories of their own



spaces and their own communities,” says Phillips. Thus, rather than perpetuating the idea that low-income members of the community don’t belong in the midst of redevelopment, the Lab uncovers their contributions to the community’s history as well as to its future.

Black Artists Union

The Black Artists Union (BAU) (Toronto, ON) started in December 2016 as a social support group to talk about how Black artists exist in the world and share common struggles. Nathan Olufan, who originally got the group together, observed a pattern all over the country that young Black artists, despite their talent “are overlooked many times in the art world because they don’t have certain knowledge, like how to do legal things... and put their names out in the media,” according to BAU co-founder and visual artist Oreka James,



The Black Artists Union creates a platform for Black artists to share resources

Consisting of visual artists, a textile artist and a sculptor, five of whom operate out of The White House Studio in Kensington, BAU has bloomed into a collective of 14 core members. The goal is to “hold skills-sharing workshops for us by us,” says James, “to really be able to give resources to other Black creatives, because we know how the system works: it’s really hard to navigate... and find people who want to reach out and help you move and grow financially.”

The process has been one of self-discovery, with BAU producing the show *Those Who Dance* during February. After its success, they decided to produce a three-month show in July 2018 to “let go of the idea that Black History Month is just in February” as it isn’t enough time to talk about Black history.

BAU is doing outreach into the wider community through upcoming events such as monthly film screenings throughout the summer and has applied for funding as it hopes to keep expanding and eventually secure space, either in the West end or in Scarborough. “We’d like to own a space to remind the neighbourhoods that we are here” says James. The spaces being lost to gentrification are “part of our culture, and these spaces can’t just be erased.”

Of course, money is an issue both as individual artists and as a collective, however this doesn’t stop James or BAU. “We can create our own spaces... instead of having the world give us spaces in art,” states James. The art world is “not touching on things that we need most” and “we know what we need most.” For James, BAU “wants the rest of the community to know that we *can* do it by ourselves... if we just have the resources *much* is possible.”

Babely Shades

Elsa Mirzaei felt uncomfortable going to indie rock shows in Ottawa as a brown-skinned woman, so she began going with her friends. Naturally, as people of colour in spaces composed mainly of white men, they experienced plenty of microaggressions. Looking for strategies to address the lack of diversity and representation of queer folks and women of colour in the Ottawa indie music scene, Mirzaei and others formed a collective called Babely Shades.

Now the group writes blogs and articles about issues they face as queer and trans folks and people of colour, and host monthly events such as Space Jam. One of the collective’s key missions is to create safe spaces, and warn members about abusers and community spaces that are not queer- or POC-friendly. Babely Shades members take an activist approach to creating safe spaces by contacting venue owners in attempting to address their racism, ableism, or transphobia. Venues and their friends have not always been so receptive, and the group has unfortunately received death threats trying to achieve this kind of accountability. Nevertheless, Seiizmikk, a member of the collective, holds that challenging these spaces is important to Babely Shades because “a lot of times people are doing things out of internalized racism that they don’t even realize they’re doing... and it’s important to bring it to light.” Babely Shades partners with organizations such as Project Soundcheck, who try to “make sure that there’s no sexual abuse or harassment happening in shows in Ottawa.”

The idea of safe space in the music scene is not just limited to Ottawa. Babely Shades has grown to include offshoots in Montreal and Toronto, each expressing the mission of the collective in different ways. For instance, members of Babely Shades Toronto, such as promoter Nala Ismacil, put together a zine in January of this year titled “Black Punk” about Black artists and punk fans, inspired by zinester and punk artist Osa Atoe of Shotgun Seamstress zine. Babely Shades Toronto also recently held a zine making workshop led by Toronto artist Heidi Cho.

Babely Shades is necessary because “minorities are still struggling to have access to spaces and opportunities... within the city,” says Seiizmikk. The collective provides a much-needed platform for queer and trans people of colour to keep each other safe and forge their way forward in the indie music scene. **bp**

EVERYDAY SUPERHEROES

Is fandom a new frontier for DIY?

by David Silverberg

"ARE YOU BOBA FETT?"

"Do you know Darth Vader?"

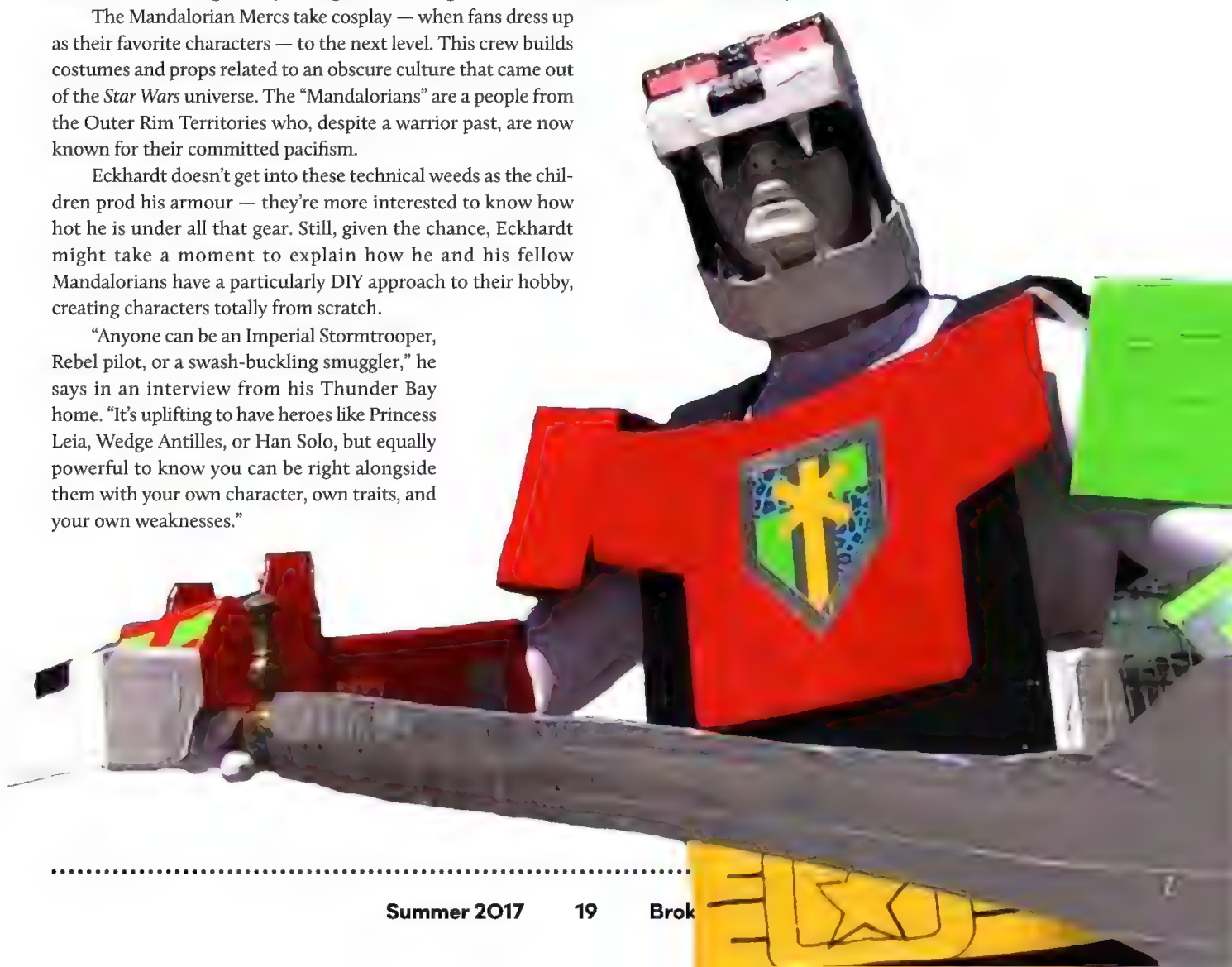
Drew Eckhardt fielded these questions from the five-year-olds huddled around him at the Victoriaville Mall in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It was just before Christmas, 2016. A guy dressed as Santa wasn't far off, but all young eyes were focused on Eckhardt and his fellow Mandalorian Mercs, thanks to their passion for full-gear *Star Wars* dress-up.

Eckhardt and his squad were covered head to toe with breastplates, gauntlets, helmets — all made from everyday material found around the house. Some sported bright reddish colours, while others looked more menacing in all black. At first glance, you might have thought Comic-Con had come to Thunder Bay.

The Mandalorian Mercs take cosplay — when fans dress up as their favorite characters — to the next level. This crew builds costumes and props related to an obscure culture that came out of the *Star Wars* universe. The "Mandalorians" are a people from the Outer Rim Territories who, despite a warrior past, are now known for their committed pacifism.

Eckhardt doesn't get into these technical weeds as the children prod his armour — they're more interested to know how hot he is under all that gear. Still, given the chance, Eckhardt might take a moment to explain how he and his fellow Mandalorians have a particularly DIY approach to their hobby, creating characters totally from scratch.

"Anyone can be an Imperial Stormtrooper, Rebel pilot, or a swash-buckling smuggler," he says in an interview from his Thunder Bay home. "It's uplifting to have heroes like Princess Leia, Wedge Antilles, or Han Solo, but equally powerful to know you can be right alongside them with your own character, own traits, and your own weaknesses."



He goes on to say, "We all like to dream of the world of tomorrow. We see it in the faces of children, that imagination is still relevant. We see it in the faces of adults, who want to recapture their childhood and see the potential in themselves to accomplish this."

The Mercs pull off this powerful and playful creativity with the kind of commitment some of us reserve only for Halloween. After all, these are adults going all out as a *Star Wars* character creating stylish and complex costumes, props and weapons, inspired by their favourite films or TV show. Many of them don't have any engineering or costuming experience.

This kind of deep DIY fan life is not just a passion people keep sequestered in their basement. Besides showing off the finished product on the streets and at fan

"SOMETIMES THE ROLE OF THE AMATEUR GETS FORGOTTEN AND WE EXPECT PROFESSIONALS TO DO EVERYTHING AND DO ALL MEANINGFUL THINGS. BUT THE DIY SPIRIT APPLIES TO EVERYONE."



gatherings, these creators are using tools such as YouTube to share skills and chronicle the process of building up a cultural icon from scratch.

Under heavy guitar riffs on a YouTube video, I'm watching a blender take on a mix of potassium chloride, 70 percent isopropyl alcohol, acetaldehyde and road flare compounds. Then a fit-looking guy coats a sword, threaded with wicks, in this chemical smoothie. If this weren't already a lot going on, the sword also features an electric lighter, a flick of which covers the weapon in a purple flame. Who doesn't want to swing around a purple flaming sword?

In his massive garage, James Hobson, of Kitchener, Ontario, has recreated Psylocke's "psionic sword" from the film *X-Men Apocalypse*. At 782,000 views, this video's popularity is on the low-end for Hobson, aka The Hacksmith. With more than one million subscribers to his YouTube channel, Hobson has attracted more than 76 million views total since he began building fictional weapons and vehicles in 2006.

He's one of many model weapon makers (though a rare Canadian) who reveals the secrets behind his builds, from Wolverine claws to Batman grappling guns. "We don't just want to show the final product, but how we did it, to inspire any young engineers out there," says Hobson.

Hobson boasts an impressive engineering background and several years working at Dolby, and his expertise shows in his narration. He breaks down the math and science in simple terms. Judging by comments on his videos, he's inspiring many gleeful builders-in-arms.

"Most are self-taught on the net," says Hobson of his fellow weapons makers. "My engineering degree gave me a great background, but it didn't teach me how to create cool things I saw in movies, video games and TV shows."

Hobson is a big deal, and has fielded interest from TV executives, but he's stiff-arming offers. "They wouldn't want us to continue our Hacksmith YouTube page, and we can't afford to do that," he explains.

Another creator, Sean Ward, might not have Hobson's technical know-how, but he shares the joy of creating videos for other fans and makers. The Toronto resident has shot more than 300 YouTube videos since 2010.

It can be intimidating for newbie costume makers and props builders to get in the game. But Drew Eckhardt, an Ontario member of the Mandalorian Mercs costume club, has broken down a handy step-by-step list on making your first fantastical armour:

Step 1: Choose what you want to make. Make the right tools, or tools, or stand by.

Step 2: Select your material such as EVA, or ABS plastic. You can use other materials like aluminum or metal, but the main thing is the best for weight and price.

Step 3: The most common thing is to use a so you can have it's easier to take away than to remove. It's best to have someone assist you. Fill your mold cavity with an and use a spray gun to spray the material to your chest for example. Take the mold out of the mold and out of the plastic. You can use to create. Good luck, checking and a strong ensures a proper fit in the body and a strong grip.

Step 4: Cut the pattern and attach to the body. It's ideal to attach the edges to the body. You can use the rest of the armor together. Having jagged edges, or sharp edges, can make it not look as though it's a single material after painting.

Step 5: Heat the material to form it to your body. A *3D printer* heat gun is the most efficient for armor building, but blow torches can be used and there are a lot of tools to make the material plastic. For safety, though, use a heat gun. At a starter price.

Step 6: If you're using a spray gun, use a spray gun.

Step 7: If you're using a spray gun, use a spray gun.

Step 8: If you're using a spray gun, use a spray gun. Use a spray gun to spray the material to your chest for example. Take the mold out of the mold and out of the plastic. You can use to create. Good luck, checking and a strong ensures a proper fit in the body and a strong grip.

Step 9: If you're using a spray gun, use a spray gun. Use a spray gun to spray the material to your chest for example. Take the mold out of the mold and out of the plastic. You can use to create. Good luck, checking and a strong ensures a proper fit in the body and a strong grip.

Step 10: If you're using a spray gun, use a spray gun. Use a spray gun to spray the material to your chest for example. Take the mold out of the mold and out of the plastic. You can use to create. Good luck, checking and a strong ensures a proper fit in the body and a strong grip.

* * *

Despite the high-budget and big-box vibe of the series and cinema they work from, this new set of creators and community builders are doing it wholly for, and by themselves. No Hollywood experience required. : 🍷



THE SISTERS AND THE ASH

by Sarah Heying

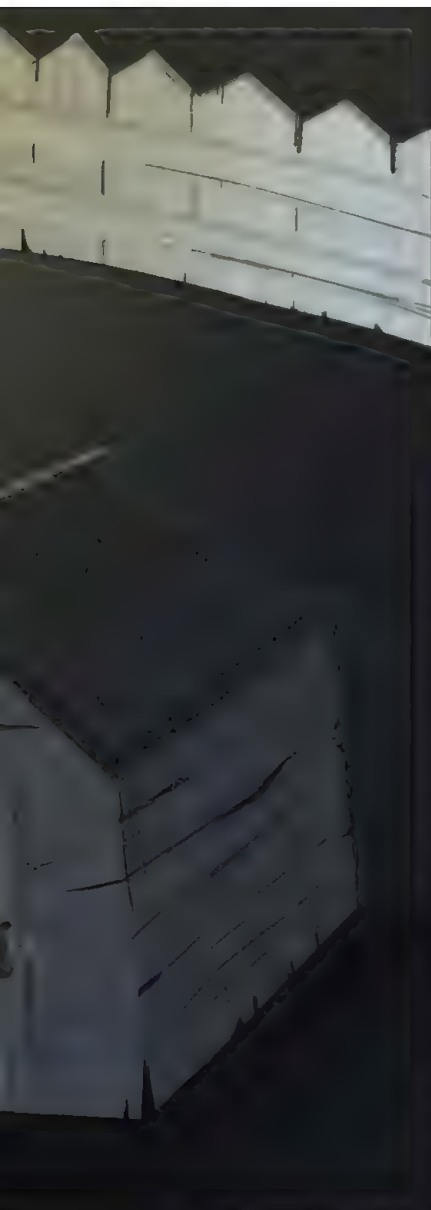


Illustration by Samantha Lucy

WHEN THE MOTHER ghosted, the three sisters were left with her rings and her teapot and her hairbrushes full of long gray hair. They were left with a gray house, stained walls, and a very drunk father, his belt and his rage.

The mother had not known how to protect them. And then she became too weak to leave her bed. But the sisters were smart, each one smarter than the last, and they learned how to protect themselves.

While on a camping trip in the mountains, the eldest met an old but agile crone who lived in a cave. From the crone, she learned a rare martial art which she quickly mastered and taught to her sisters. Each sister slept with a beautifully jeweled knife — a surprising parting gift from the mother — tucked under her pillow.

One night, the father came into the youngest sister's room to massage her feet. She struck him so hard in the chest that he fell backward. From the floor, he saw her knife glittering above him like a menacing star.

After that, the father began to live in earnest fear. He took up the anxious habits of one afraid. Smoking. Pacing. His old addictions — yelling, beating, and drinking — were no longer allowed. He dared not smoke in the house after his middle daughter's strident lecture on secondhand cancer. He cowered in the corners of the rooms, covering his words with coughs. The sisters pretended he wasn't there — and indeed, he became nearly invisible to them, just a light mildew dusting the baseboards, fading to green-gray mist.

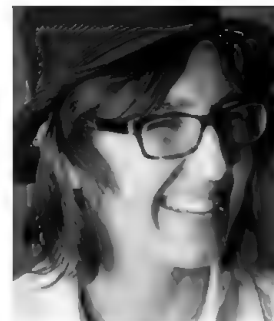
One day the eldest sister entered the living room carrying a soapy sponge and a bucket and the father retreated to the garage to hide among the rusty car parts and old sports magazines. Chain-smoking, he'd leaf through swimsuit issues, looking at breasts and thighs, the hint of a carefully shaved mound. Even the youngest bodies were like dead wood to him. Nothing plucked his imagination. A lead-stomached grief filled him, where once had been virile rage.

In his absence, the house became cheery. The sisters washed all the walls and painted them bright cherry, sassy turquoise, I-caught-a-canary yellow. The father's ratty furniture and smelly clothes made a heavenly bonfire when burned with sticks of fragrant incense. There were late and loud parties, stomping dances, music of horn and saxophone and trumpet, each sister emptying her lungs into song. It was as if their father had never been born, had never lived.

Years passed. The sisters took lovers and let them go, deepened friendships, learned trades, grew an abundant garden. The middle sister became a brother. The youngest had a child they collectively raised. They had long forgotten the father when, one day, the youngest sister went out to mow the lawn and noticed a ghost ship — the garage — sagging at the edge of their property. She thought it would make a nice art studio for the child.

The door was bolted from the inside. She had to kick it open. Dust upon dust — she could barely see for all the motes stirred up in the air. At the back of the garage she saw a shrunken figure balanced between a bench and a worktable. She stepped closer. Under a thick layer of dust was a skeleton barely held together by the thin paper of its dried skin. Between two fingers: a dead cigarette, a long fingernail of ash at its tip.

The daughter blew softly and watched as her father crumbled to dust. 



Sarah Heying is a queer writer who grew up in Missouri, though she's spent her entire adulthood moving around the South. She currently lives in Memphis, TN, with her two big goofy dogs.



MY MOTHER, IN 2075

by Erika Price

SHE CAN'T REMEMBER the important bad things. I ask her about the divorces and the dead dogs buried in the woods and the cracks in the bathroom tile and the negative, blood red balance in her checking account and her eyes go blank and she shakes her head like she's been overcome by some faint neurological chill.

I show her a photograph of my 8-year-old self in snow pants and a knit cap and she smiles and coos with familiarity, but cannot say what happened that day. She can't recall what happened in the van when the park was closed and her father got angry. She cannot look at the burn mark on my arm and apologize.

A life ago, I worked at a VA hospital, sponging the slim bodies of the patients who could not move. I also volunteered to cut the old women's hair. I had a steady hand and good instincts. I could transform a yellowed, scraggly mop into a coiffed, snowy white puff in less than an hour. They sat shaking below me as I transformed them into beautiful, wise owls. I took pride in my work.

The psychiatric nurses warned me not to let the patients with pink wristbands go anywhere near a mirror. If they caught sight of themselves in a spare bedpan or blackened television, I was cautioned to pull them away, distract them, or turn a game-show on.

Those pink-wristed patients had anterograde memory failure. They lived forever in the hazy past, unable to form memories of new events. In their minds, they were many decades younger, still dewy and unfinished. When they caught sight of their reflections, they did not see themselves. They saw their grandmothers, or aunts, or the old women who sat behind them at church, purses filled with butterscotch. The disparity between imagined and actual self was a massive source of distress for those pink-wristed patients. They dealt with the shock in unpredictable ways.

My mom's re-up is kind of like that. When she was dying, she chose to upload only the best memories. Storage space came at a premium back then, so she sifted through her brain to select the stand-out favorites. There was no incentive to uphold the truth. I cannot blame her for that. I just can't. It would make me crazy.

I love what is left of my mom as best I can, and she loves me better than ever. She remembers my knobby knees running through the sprinkler. She remembers the cartoons I would watch on sick days, belly-down on the carpet, and how my face looked propped up on the heels of my hands. She eats the peanut butter and grape jelly sandwiches I make her and remembers that they are her favorite. She enjoys cold cereal and milk for dinner, especially when it is hot out. It is always hot out, now, but she cannot remember why.

She remembers my graduation, and the crimson velvet sack I wore, but not the partner who stood by my side or the yellowing bruise that peeked out of my sleeve. She remembers long summers of riding rollercoasters, but not my violent puking. She does not remember her dead son, who lived to be ten, then withered away in an oxygen tent. When she came to live with me, I was forced to hide all his photos. When she discovered them in the garage, I was forced to tear them up and flush them down the toilet.

I'm glad to have this happy remnant of her, sleeping all day in my guest room. She is always near my heart, like a precious heirloom jewel hanging off my neck. When she died, brain uploading was still a novelty, so her resurrection felt like a spell from a fairytale. Of course there was a curse embedded in it. All the worthwhile spells are costly like that.

At night we sit in the kitchen and play dozens of games of UNO. We sit on the loveseat and share a bowl of black kernel popcorn while watching TV. She remembers all the lyrics to *The Sound of Music* and *The Wiz*. I stare at the movements of her shiny plastic face while she sings them.

I try, so hard, to keep her from seeing my sadness. It is an unfamiliar sight to her. She has no memories of the sad me. She takes my cheeks between her plastic fingers and tries to tug at the muscles buried beneath my skin. There is something bad happening she has no capacity to understand. I have a responsibility to hide from her that which she cannot fathom. She will break herself trying to fix it. **bp**



Erika Price is a writer and social psychologist in Chicago. Erika's work has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *The Toast*, *Bacopa Literary Review*, *Literary Orphans*, and has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize.

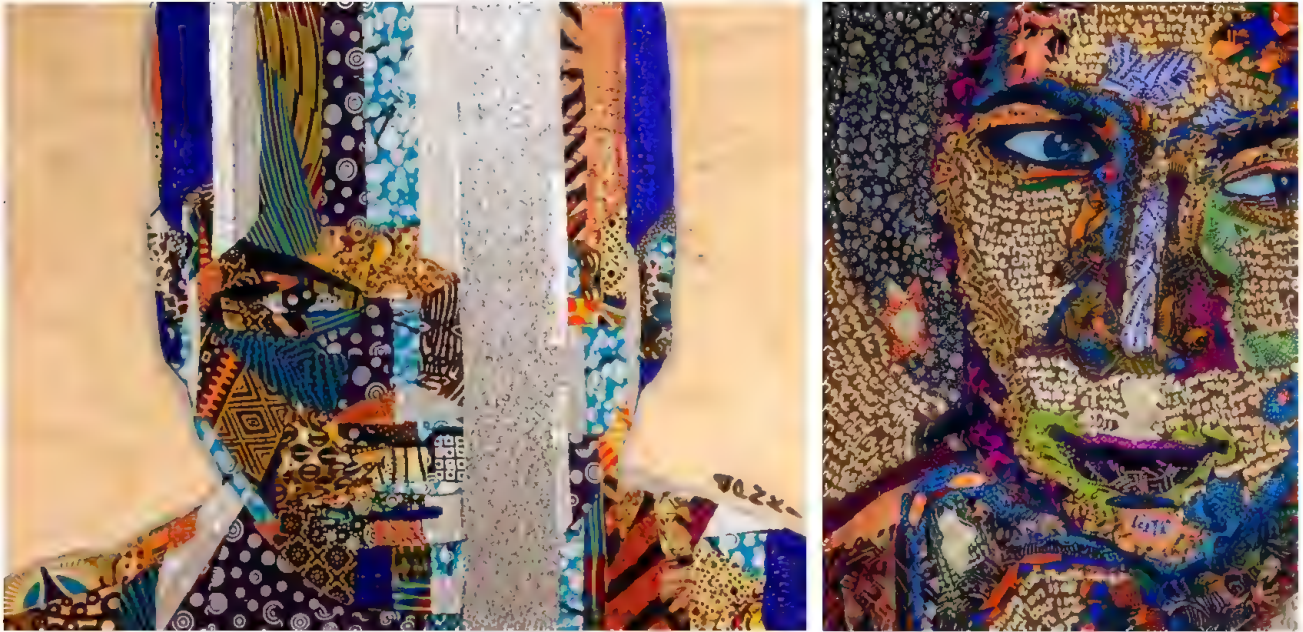
Illustration by Samantha Lucy

Folio: re/mixing media

In each issue, Broken Pencil asks an artist to curate Folio — a section highlighting creators working in unexpected media and materials.

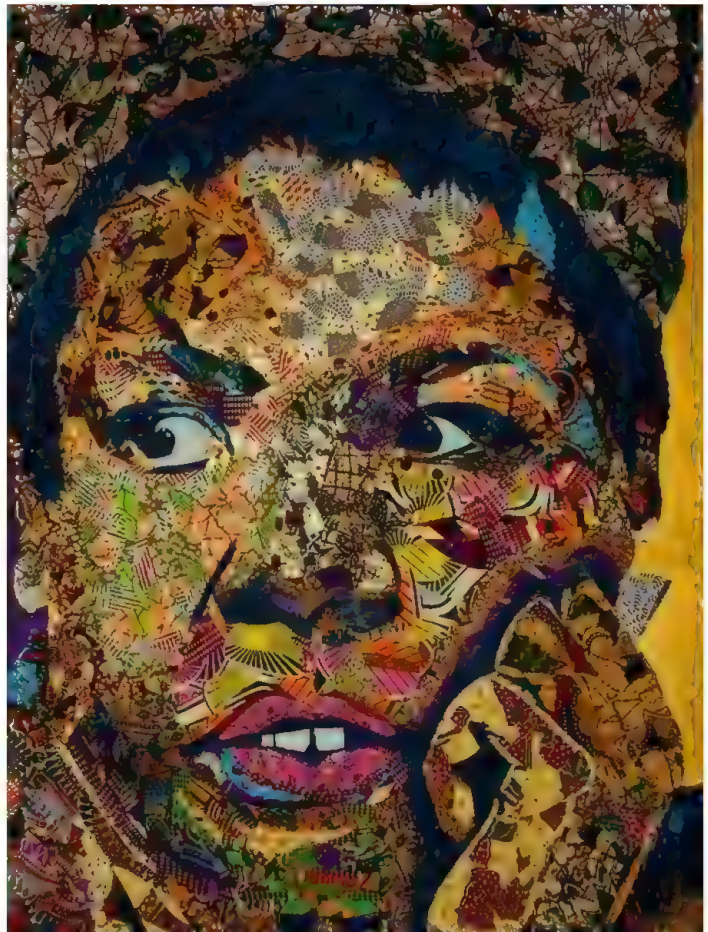
*This Folio is curated by **Komi Olaf***

Apanaki Temitayo M



Born in Toronto and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, **Apanaki Temitayo M** is an author, spoken word poet, actor, multimedia artist and teacher. As part of Workman Arts Art-Cart Program at CAMH, she teaches art to participants with mental health and drug addiction. She has had pieces featured at Workman Arts, Being Scene 16th Annual Juried Exhibition 2017 at the Gladstone Hotel, The Rendezvous With Madness Film Festival, and at Workman Arts for Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, 2015. She made her international debut at the North Charleston Cultural Arts Department, 9th Annual African American Fiber Art Exhibition: Maya Angelou, with her original artwork, Mama's Watching in South Carolina, and her New York debut at The Amazing Nina Simone Documentary Film by Jeff Lieberman, with her piece Nina Simone Fragmented. She honored to be the first woman of color to be in the *Room Magazine: Woman of Color Issue* for 2016.

www.apanaki-temitayo-m.pixelforpeople.com



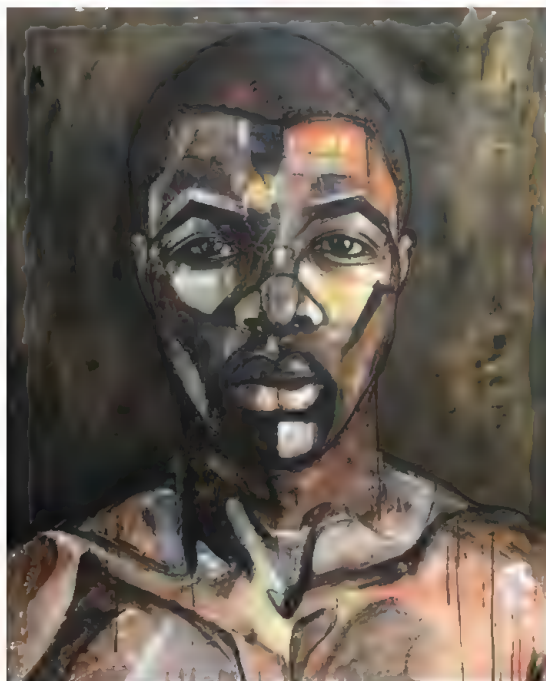
Chaka Chikodzi



Chaka Chikodzi is an Ontario-based stone sculptor originally from Zimbabwe. He learned the stone sculpting tradition at the age of 13 under the tutelage of an older brother. Chaka describes his art practice as “a survival technique and a form of translation,” citing Black experience as central to his expression. As an arts educator and activist, Chaka has developed annual youth immersive arts’ programming that has received support from the Ontario Arts Council for seven consecutive years. Run under the banner “Out of the City,” the program is a five-day intensive camp for new Canadian and immigrant youth that fosters cross-cultural exchange and encourages young people to build relationships through interdisciplinary arts exercises, centred around stone sculpting. In 2015, Chaka completed an international residency with Voti Thebe, regional director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, where he explored Indigenous concepts of time and space in a globalised, postcolonial world. More at

www.chakachikodzi.com

Oluseye



Informed by Yoruba mythology and the geometric form, **Oluseye** fuses the human, the sculptural, and the traditional in his search for the archetypal balance between the spiritual and physical self. Combining acrylic, charcoal, pastel and steel wire, he embarks on an intersectional exploration of Black male identity, existentialism, sexuality and outsider cultures.

More at www.olu-seye.com

Zine Reviews



Dear Journal #2

Compilation zine,

Laina Hughes & Dunja Kovacevic (ed.),

dearjrn1@gmail.com

Flipping open the pages of this anthology of intersectional feminism just after it arrived at my front door, I was pleasantly surprised to stumble across the work of Rochelle Brockington, a Brooklyn-based body-positive photographer. I'm a keen follower of their Instagram (@fatleopard.jpeg) and the presence of their work in *Dear Journal's* Summer 2016 issue read like a call to arms — and as a fat, Black, femme reader, it immediately piqued my interest.

Published bi-annually, this sleekly-bound second issue of *Dear Journal* puts each of its 92 pages to work. The work of its 39 contributors spans a variety of formats — stories, poetry, artwork, and thoughts — and it swells with content reflecting on the experiences of women, non-binary, and two-spirit folx. Melissa Martin's "staggering forward" hits hard and with feeling. Statements like "hierarchical masculinity swallowed up our stories" command a focused space of reclamation for the journal's contributors. In keeping with the anthology's aims, the writers, poets, and artists featured span across the lines and limits of gender, sexuality, ability, race, and geography.

In light of this, the tendency of the journal's white contributors to avoid any acknowledgment of their whiteness and its role in an intersectional feminist practice is glaring. At times the historical and social positioning of white femininity and femininity (more broadly speaking) become conflated as one, as in Cathleen Evans' piece, leaving me to

wonder, as its title does: "Ain't I A Woman?" Other pieces, such as Jen Zoratti's essay, "This is 30," wherein she looks back on her time spent as a music critic and fan in relation to feminist politics, are deeply engaging and refreshingly accessible. Similarly, Vartika Sharma's vibrant collage work looks at the relations between feminism and cult, camp, and kitsch aesthetics. I highly recommend squirreling away for a lengthy moment (or two) to pour over the range of narratives in the space carved out by this issue of *Dear Journal*. (Sarah-Tai Black)

Dislocations #2

Perzine, Candace Mooers, 2393 Sheppard,
Montréal, QC, H2K 3L1,
\$1-\$3 PWYC

Have you heard of Fun-A-Day? In January, people are encouraged to start an artistic project they then complete daily for the month. Many zinesters use this opportunity to write a new issue. In Candace's case, they had other Fun-A-Day plans, but ended up writing *Dislocations* #2, subtitled *Poly Queer Gemini Heart*, on the eve of the Montreal Fun-A-Day showcase.

Part (fictional) journal of the author's life, part interviews with activists they admire, *Dislocations* is a text heavy read. I found the diary portions of the zine more difficult to read, as Candace mentions many friends and lovers — I didn't always remember which person they were referring to, and what their relationship to them was. Still, it was an interesting look into a polyamorous person's life.

I did enjoy the interviews Candace conducted and then transcribed in the context of radio programmes they co-host. In this issue, they talk to a woman working to end immigration detentions, a woman working to create 24-hour drop-ins in Toronto, and Anarchopanda, the Montreal philosophy professor made famous for his political commentary during the 2012 student strike.

Although *Dislocations* #2 felt a bit rushed as a zine, Candace is a good writer, and I look forward to reading more of their work. (Maxime Brunet)



Hello My Name is Frugal

Zine, Anneliese Schoppe, 8 pgs, \$5

In the age of side hustles and creative subsistence lifestyles, we are all counting our pennies. Anneliese Schoppe has packed tons of penny-saving tips and good, financially savvy advice into *Hello My Name is Frugal*.

Anneliese's first tip is made by example: save printing and paper costs by packing your text super dense! There's a lot of information in these 8 pages, but the basic guidance is to identify financial goals, create a personal budget, and then follow Anneliese's collection of tips to meet those goals within your budget. Anneliese covers financial awareness basics like banking, shopping and self-control. A budget worksheet is included, so you can break down your monthly expenses. All kinds of suggestions are offered to make socializing cheaper. Anneliese also offers critical questions to ask yourself before you buy something to make sure you're checking your impulses.

This is a great collection of information and will probably help some people out. The dense formatting can make the zine a little tricky to navigate and hard to digest. Based on some pieces of advice (like using particular resources at the Winnipeg Public Library), I gather that the zine is directed to a Winnipeg audience. Some of that advice is probably transferable to other communities, though. In general, this looks like a helpful resource, and worth checking out. (Joshua Barton)



Koogmo #9

Zine, Anthony Abelaye, Issue 9, PO Box 861294, Plano, TX 75086, USA, \$1

Funny, quirky, or strange — those are the attributes that tie the stories in this collection together, at least judging by the submission guidelines on the last page. I wish I had read that page first, because not knowing made this collection of random factoids, crackpot philosophy, prison letters, and other snapshots of life not just hard to make sense of, but downright depressing!

A heartfelt intro confirms that Abelaye indeed worried this assemblage

was “too random.” Said intro was written on a typewriter he found on the ground in 1993, and judging by the ink flow, it is either poorly calibrated or recently had its ribbon changed. Why is this important? Well, it gives this zine that 1990s feel — it’s like a relic from a time when zines generally fell into three or four categories: fanzines (interviews and reviews), perzines (creative nonfiction), tribute zines (zines about specific bands), and everything else — those rare zines that just seemed to be about *anything*. Koogmo takes me back to that last, most random, occasionally troubling kind of zine, a zine that is like stumbling over a letter you’re not supposed to see or intercepting a recording that is disturbing out of context. Thrill-seekers should order and weirdos should contribute. (Chris Landry)



Living Not Existing

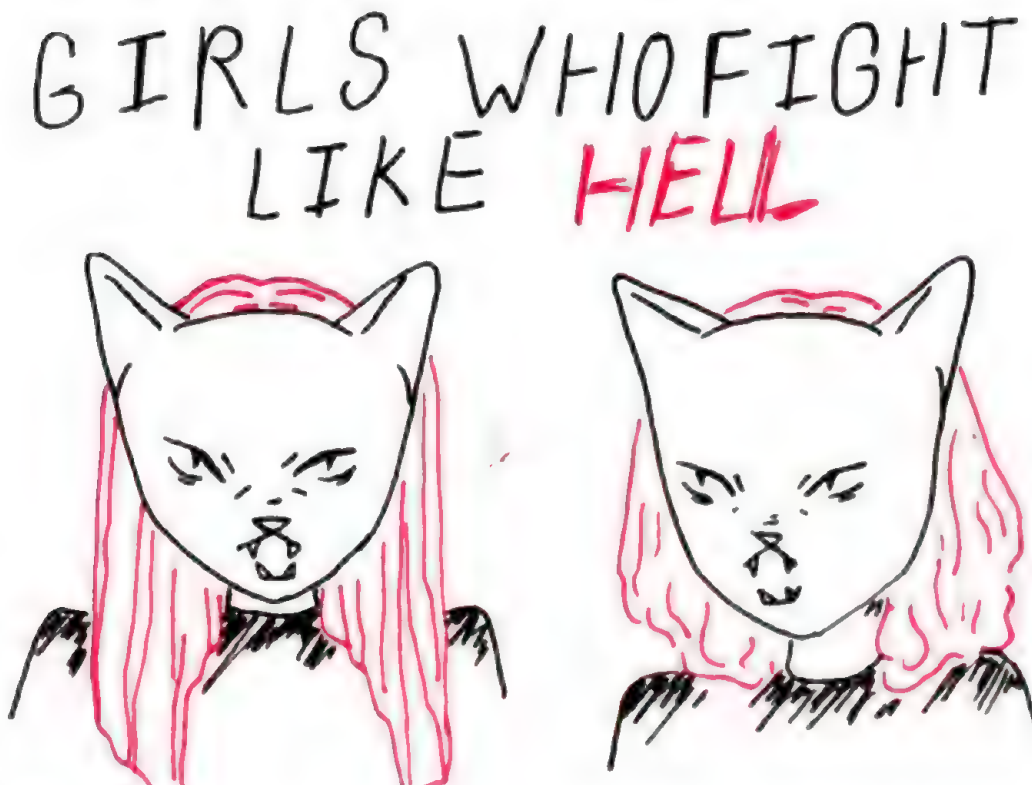
Perzine, geoff, Issue 3, livingnotexisting.org, \$3

Content warning: Drugs, relapse, addiction, psychiatry, attempted suicide, violence.

I’ve always been drawn to the zine-maker’s ability to cover subjects often seen as controversial by mainstream

Excerpt

from All the Badass Girls I’ve Ever Known
by Shelby McLeod



Reviewed on page 39

media. In issue 3 of *Living Not Existing*, Toronto Queer Zine Fair co-founder and zinester geoff speaks about their experiences dealing with addiction and mental health.

In a series of short and eloquent pieces, geoff describes their road to sobriety, as well as their experiences as a mixed-race genderqueer of Filipinx descent. A lot of their stories touch on self-discovery and their process of finding their place in the world. Although *Living Not Existing* definitely has some heavy content, I found it to be both a positive and inspiring zine, as exemplified in a piece titled "Dear Former geoff:" "It's ok to cry (...) I wanted to tell you all of this because I wish somebody would have told me these things when I was growing up. Because I wish somebody told me that I was okay for who I was, that I wasn't a bad person, that I was meant to be who I was meant to be."

Regardless of your background and experiences with addiction and mental health, I am sure you'll find some strength in geoff's writing. Recommended. (Maxime Brunet)

Love-Addict: Trials in Online Dating

Perzine, Aleksandra McHugh & Stuart Calton, *Earthly City Productions*, 26 pgs, \$5

Transparency is *Love-Addict's* biggest strength, and perhaps its most oblivious flaw. This peek into a life of online dating through the lens of someone with borderline personality disorder (BPD) has such lucidity, clear and without filter. The clarity of *Love-Addict* can be disturbing and illuminating, as most art sprouting from personal epiphany can be.

But is it too much? While reading this zine, I skated a fine line between

wanting to put it down and keep feverishly reading. To be frank, although I praise *Love-Addict's* lack of filters, it also feels chaotic at the core. Maybe that's the point; online dating is hard, and online dating with BPD seems, from *Love-Addict*, an entirely different dimension. The act of rifling through past loves, kinks, and known imperfections, along with a mental health diagnosis, creates a very interesting dialogue. The material parts of the zine were excellent: sturdy paper, with nice legible print, and unique illustrations. The zine was part of a project called *Bad Dates*, which were captured Facebook updates by Aleksandra McHugh (one of the co-authors of *Love-Addict*). The zine is a powerful chronicle of her interactions, and searches for those who can acknowledge and understand the ways love can warp and exhilarate us. It's disconnected to read, but it has its own

Excerpt

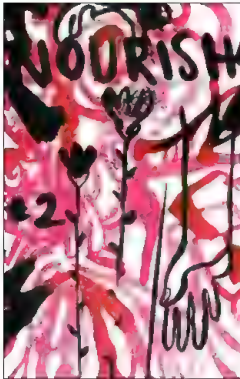
from All the Badass Girls I've Ever Known
by Shelby McLeod

AND THOSE WHO
COULDN'T KEEP
THEIR
TAILS
OUT OF
TROUBLE



Reviewed on page 39

power, which not everyone might get on a first read. (KK Taylor)



Nourish #2

Perzine, Sabrina Scott, Issue 2,
witchbod

I've been making and reading zines for a long time, and I think this is the most personal perzine I've ever encountered. All the hits are here: sexual assault, self-harm, mental illness, sexual orientation, and

gender identity. These are well-trod topics in the zine world, but what makes Sabrina's work so exceptional is that they find new ways to discuss these familiar subjects.

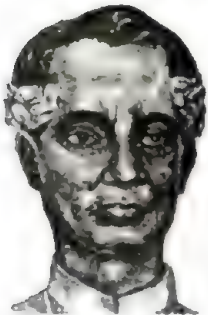
Particularly striking was the parallel they drew between the bravery needed to undergo surgery — especially elective surgery — and the courage it takes to let ourselves be seen and really, really, truly known by other people. It's the same thing. Of course it's the same thing — letting our insides show and allowing someone else to dig around in there. They're also a great writer with an almost lyrical style. Along with their raw personal stories and righteous anger, Sabrina also offers a lengthy list of practical suggestions for how to *actually* be good ally to rape survivors, providing both research suggestions and practical actions. These are things you can learn about and do to be a good ally for real. This list is an antidote to the folks who perform progressive politics on social

Excerpt

from PSL

by Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts + Culture

2. The Balagtasan



A Balagtasan is a poetic debate performed by two poets on opposing sides ('*Dapat*' and '*Hindi-Dapat*'). It is traditionally performed in metered verse, in the '*awit*' style (12 syllables, 4 lines), and is extemporaneous. Balagtasans are commonly used to debate various relevant social issues.

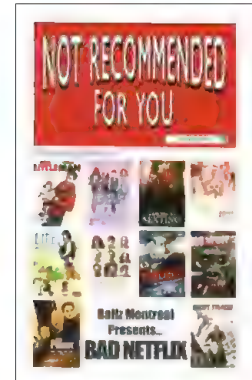
The Balagtasan was named after the respected poet, political activist and historical figure, Francisco Balagtas (left).

The Balagtasans in this chapter follow the theme "The Tools of Colonization".

DAPAT - FOR
HINDI DAPAT - AGAINST

Reviewed on page 48

media, but come up pretty clueless when presented with a real life survivor who suffered real-life trauma who might be having a rough time on a particular day. Maybe like the day a former Canadian media darling is found not-guilty of multiple violent sexual assaults in one of the most widely covered criminal trials in recent memory. I don't know, I'm just spitballing, here. (Mary Green)

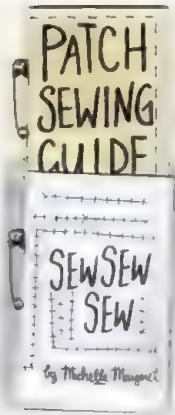


Not Recommended for You

Zine, Roxanne Hudon, 36 pgs,
hudon_roxane@hotmail.com,
ballzmontreal.com, \$5

"Carpe Yolo" wraps the zine *Not Recommended For You* (NRFY) in a sorta snippy fashion, and it makes for a good exclamation for a effort that has much utility. NRFY was published by Montreal-based anti-publisher Ballz Montreal. It's basically a public service announcement from writer Roxanne Hudon, a movie fan who spent (assumedly) quite a bit of time enduring the less savoury bits of Netflix and writing about them. She writes capsule reviews for various films and television shows, and offers her point of view as to why you should probably avoid them. This zine features big names: Nicolas Cage, Kate Bosworth, Dolph Lundgren. The tone of NRFY is gosh darn direct. Let's just say Hudon doesn't care much for any of the films and programs featured, and she's ready to let the world know. She blends colourful language, sharp words and a few well-placed spoilers in her reviews. The common thread: she thinks all this stuff sucks. In 2017, you'd typically find these kind of words

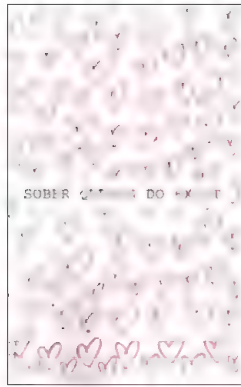
on somebody's Facebook page or a low-trafficked WordPress blog. Props to Ballz Montreal and Hudon for being true to da hard copy and becoming the zine equivalent of a punk rock Leonard Maltin. (Cam Gordon)



Patch Sewing Guide and Sew Sew Sew

Zine, Michelle Margaret,
stitchwizardry.etsy.com, \$5

Don't you hate it when you've spent hours covering your favourite hoodie or denim vest with sick patches, only to have them fall off the first time some well-meaning friend or relative is able to wrestle the garment away from you and run it through the wash? Worry no more! Both of these 1/8-size zines contain instructions on how to stitch patches on your stuff and have them stay put, whatever adventures or laundromats may come. Each zine is bound with a long safety pin along the spine, and they came bundled together in a repurposed plastic ID badge holder, which I found both creative and practical. *Patch Sewing Guide* contains the most detailed instructions and suggests a few different stitches you can use, and also includes helpful strategies like how you can sew with nylon thread or dental floss, and how to singe the ends rather than knotting them for an even firmer grip. *Sew Sew Sew* contains similar information, but its instructions are more minimalist, with many words whited-out so the tutorials are transformed into poetry. (Mary Green)



Sober Queers Do Exist

Zine, Clementine Morrigan and geoff (eds.), out of print

Note: This zine is from 2016 and the project is no longer underway.

"It's kind of like playing Minesweeper with my life." That's how one contributor describes sober dating in the queer scene,

where it can seem like everyone, at the very least, casually drinks, making navigation as complex as that glitchy puzzle game of yore. In the nearly two dozen contributions to *Sober Queers Do Exist*, we find proof that here are many, many sober queer folk. The majority of contributors are queer, but also trans, mad, immigrant, asexual, and Indigenous, giving this zine an inclusive and full picture feeling.

What stuck me about this collection is that a comp zine about sobriety and queerness isn't a niche thing, as though queer issues are just a subsection of sobriety. Rather, the breadth of perspectives included here actually gives proper weight and dimension to the topic of addiction, which has maximum impact when discussed in public. By giving proper attention to the way our whole cultural matrix affects one's experience with substance use and recovery, this zine really shines.

Excerpt

from PSL

by Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts + Culture

Balagtasan I: Education / Language

HINDI DAPAT DAPAT

Rachel Evangeline Chiong Pamela Dungao

I found home in grooves of paper Yellowed by beaming sunlight touch You draw my lines, you map maker Pen stabs my palm with every clutch	Settle in the grooves of this paper Colour this with marks of black and red Follow each line, follow your maker Wield the pen clutched tight, shed red dead
---	--

My lullaby language captured In orthographic uniform Veins choke on crisp collars rupture buttons break ribs where two conform	This savage language absurd In orthographic uniform Bound collared chains of words unheard This broken tongue, formed to conform
---	---

I will paint my words on my wrists Hide letters below my elbows Propaganda on fingertips Blaspheme your maxims from below	I will paint my words on your wrist Force these letters as your betters Education on these fists Preaching pastors for you sinners
--	---

Your lips sweat foreign languages But my cool skin remains pristine phonetics pander the vanquished But you stare at class back at me	My mouth feigns its poetic truths Still, your warm skin remains dirty Phonetics pander the unfettered proofs Relinquish your class back at me
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Reviewed on page 48

Excerpt

from Don't Tell Me to Smile
by Dana Kearley



Excerpt

from Don't Tell Me to Smile
by Dana Kearley

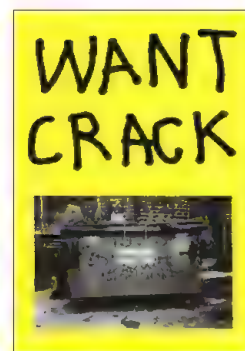


That may sound vague but what I mean to say is that *Sober Queers Do Exist* gives such a complete and engaging picture of a topic without defaulting to some hegemonic identity that perhaps plagues the average discourse on the topic. It's also really hard to overstate the quality control that has gone into editing this collection. The editors and writers eschew judging or moralizing about substance use, acknowledging that the queer community's relationship to substances is complex. They go out of their way not to wave fingers or disrespect users in the community.

As you might assume, *Sober Queers Do Exist* can get heavy at times (content warnings are provided for each contribution), but if you can handle that, you should read this and then give it to a pal. (Chris Landry)

excited for what was in store. What I got was tiny typewritten text of band interviews, a fest diary, and a think-piece about punk and disco. Some of it was interesting and some of it was uninspired. The interview with Lili Z was out of sequence (apparently a pagination error) and the whole package was inconsistent thematically. Some of these interviews got a little bro-y for my tastes.

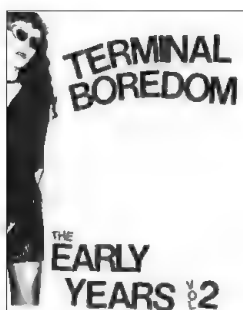
I appreciate the mission — to use print to reach folks that the internet might not, but I wonder if this would have had more impact if it were better curated and organized. But maybe I'm biased because I didn't listen to most of these bands. (Chris Landry)



Want Crack

Zine, Jean-Thomas Bouchard, 24 pgs,
stolenground.com, \$5

What does everybody want? Crack, apparently. So says this photog zine



Terminal Boredom, The Early Years

Zine, Rich Kroneiss, Issue 2,
301 Tremaine Avenue Kenmore, NY 14217
USA, terminorbored.com

I'm a librarian in my day job, so I think it behooves me to take exception to the lack of bibliographic detail in this zine. The editor does not sign their name, and and it's not explicitly clear that this is a collection of reprinted content from the zine's past, which corresponded to the garage punk revival of the oos. Plus, said reprinted content doesn't even state which issue it came from. Most fans of punk are obsessed with specifics: which pressing? Which label? Which tour?

Lack of specifics aside, the cool cover with its high contrast black and white graphic, ample negative space, and rub-on letters got my inner punk fiend

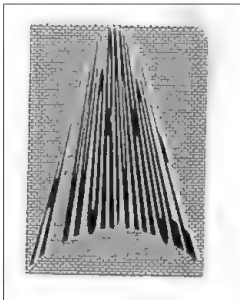
Excerpt

from He, Her, Him: Free, Fer, Frim
by Adrian Prawns Sinclair



from Jean-Thomas Bouchard, a Montreal-based snapper with an interest in referencing drugs. Back story: “El Barto” is Bart Simpson’s graffiti-tagging alter-ego, and is “one of the most infamous outlaws in Springfield” (according to some online Simpsons Wiki thing). Bouchard saw a ton of El Barto graffiti tags plastered in and around Montreal. He photographed them and made a zine: hard stop. It’s a pretty cool if you like this sort of thing.

Want Crack is a grimy zine. Pictures are in black and white and of back alleys, dumpsters, brick walls and other hot spots where El Barto appears. It’s a bit of a cultural journey too, because snippets of French language signage appear, in case you assumed this was from Winnipeg or another majority Anglo province. It’s almost anti-artistry, because Bouchard’s not about beautification; he’s about grit and, ultimately, about cataloguing. This is a collection of stuff he’s seen and the spots in which he see saw them. For that reason, *Want Crack* works well as a black and white hard copy zine rather than a Tumblr or Instagram account. It’s raw and real. (Cam Gordon)



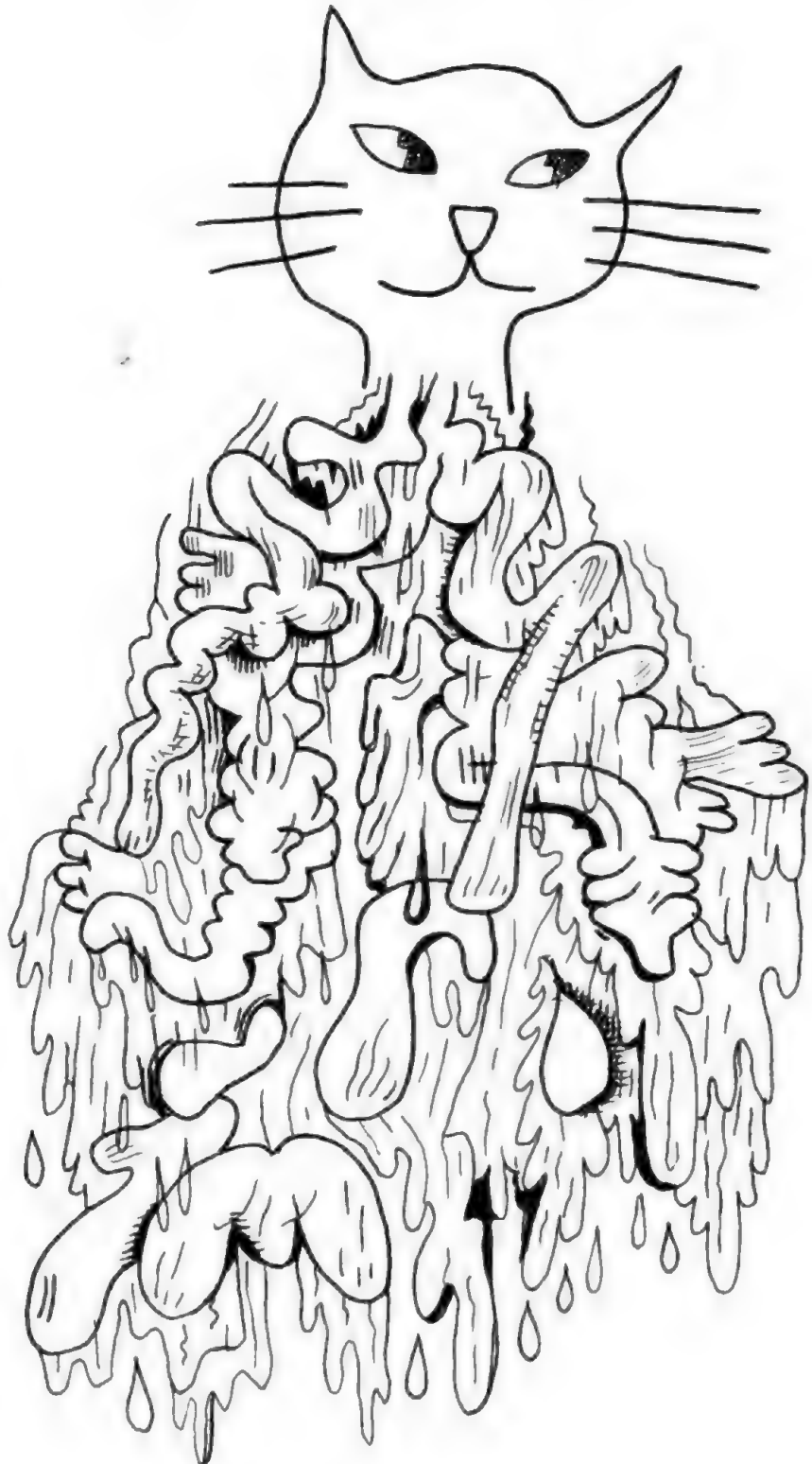
WoRMHoLE

*Zine, worm, Issue 46, 2601 Old Rt 14a,
Penn Yan, NY 14527, USA,
kworm666@yahoo.com, free*

“Best local zine!!!!!!” “totally rules!!!” “Love it + support the Print (sic)!!” These are excerpts from the zine reviews in the 46th issue of *WoRLMHoLE*, a fanzine about fanzines that might be the most enthusiastic thing I’ve ever read. This oddity almost defies reviewing simply because anything you might consider a defect in this zine is actually kind of awesome and

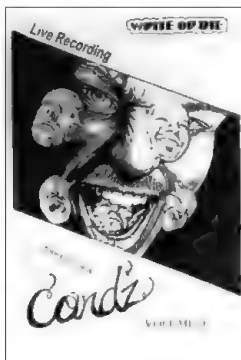
Excerpt

from *Famous Poet and the Cat*
by Neal Armstrong and Mark Connery



funny. There's the illegible front cover that might make folks with an astigmatism dizzy, there's the author, named worm, and his wretched handwriting, and then there's the fact that the reviews are a maximum of five words. It makes my head spin. But what are you going to do, ask for a refund? Forget it Jake: this is fanzine town!

Let's get down to content and format: *WoRMHoLE* features an in-depth interview with Lance Ricci, former editor of *Metal Madness*, followed by the pen and sharpie scrawl of what I am going to call micro-reviews. These barely legible nuggets are set against odd and otherworldly drawings that vaguely resemble *Black Hole*-era Charles Burns (it's unclear if they were copied, or original drawings by the author or a contributor). The review scrawl continues to the last page and the back cover, where the zine ends as oddly and abruptly as it begins. To hell with convention! This thing isn't even bound. It's stapled in the corner, which normally annoys me, but I appreciate how this editor just doesn't give an eff. (Chris Landry)



**Write Or Die:
Poetry, Prose & Condz
Vol. II**

Compilation zine, various authors,
issue 2, 52 pgs,
betweenthebars.org/group/papco,
free to prisoners

After a decade of being bombarded by self-published materials, it's nice to be reminded of just how vital and subversive this tradition can be. *Write or Die* is a mostly handwritten publication coming out of death row at the world famous San Quentin prison in California. The work of

a creative writing group within death row, the contents here reflect a diversity of approaches, experiences, and talents that are the hallmarks of this type of compilation.

It's hard to be put in the position of reviewer when I get something of this caliber in the mail. My first instinct is simply to be straight-up: you should read this. The self-expression of condemned people is so important to support and get familiar with. Without reducing the experiences and expressions of these men to their sentences, it has to be said that they are often portrayed by media and hardly ever given

the platform to tell their stories themselves. In this case, they made their own platform.

But as I just mentioned, these pages contain much more than the fight against state violence: celebrations of fatherhood, love, expressions of solidarity with Black Lives Matter on the outside, thoughts on the value of self-expression and more. The creators are also looking for collaborators on the outside for the expansion of the project, which is all the more reason to check them out and find out if that collaborator is you. So much respect for the work of these folks. (Stephane Doucet)

Excerpt

from Home Ache
by Marta Chudolinska



COMICS AND ARTZINES



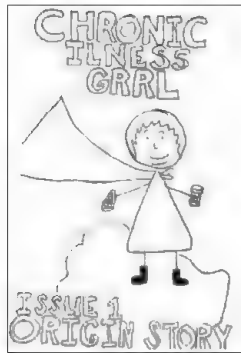
All the Badass Girls I've Ever Known

Art Zine, Shelby McLeod,
shelbymcleod.com, 8 pgs

This is the most bad-ass zine I've ever known. *Bad Ass Girls* to me is not only a zine but also embodies its mantra; short, sweet, and to the point! I am thrilled to have a zine that mixes cats and riot grrl attitudes together in perfect harmony.

McLeod's illustrations are radical. The subtle colour of reddish pink against the classic black and white print adds a punk-like brightness to the zine. I thoroughly enjoyed the layout of *Bad Ass Girls*. It's a pocket-sized zine that folds out into a page-sized "Bitch Fucked up my Jacket" illustration, which is by far my favourite illustration in the zine. If you haven't seen McLeod's work before, check out her Instagram and Tumblr (linked through her website). I just made her Tumblr page into a favourite bookmark on my laptop. This talent is too good to miss.

When I read this zine, the song "Girls like Us" from Kathleen Hanna's *The Julie Ruin* came instantaneously to mind. It's the *Bad Ass Girls* anthem; feminist love, power, rebelling, and bad-to-the-bone not-giving-a-shit! In a time where supporting and giving props to women worldwide is so necessary, celebrating all those bad-ass bitches you know should be number one on your bucket list. *Bad Ass Girls* gives us all a strong foundation to leap from. (KK Taylor)



Chronic Illness Girl

Perzine/Comic, Katie Tastrom, Issue 1,
katie.tastrom@gmail.com, \$5 or PWYC.

Katie Tastrom hits exactly the right chord in terms of charm, lived

experience, and grounded advice that will actually (for real) help those navigating the medical community as fat-bodied folks. Though they don't owe it to anyone to be charming, charm is just an irrevocable quality of the informed and nuanced first issue of their zine, *Chronic Illness Girl*. A combination of illustration, storytelling, and how-to guide, Katie's longform chronicle (or, as they refer to it, "origin story") is full of whimsy and truth presented in a navigable, accessible way. Their story is one that is relatable to any fat-identified person suffering from chronic illness and is well-presented in relation to the myriad resources and tips they offer. (I would list

Excerpt

from Home Ache
 by Marta Chudolinska



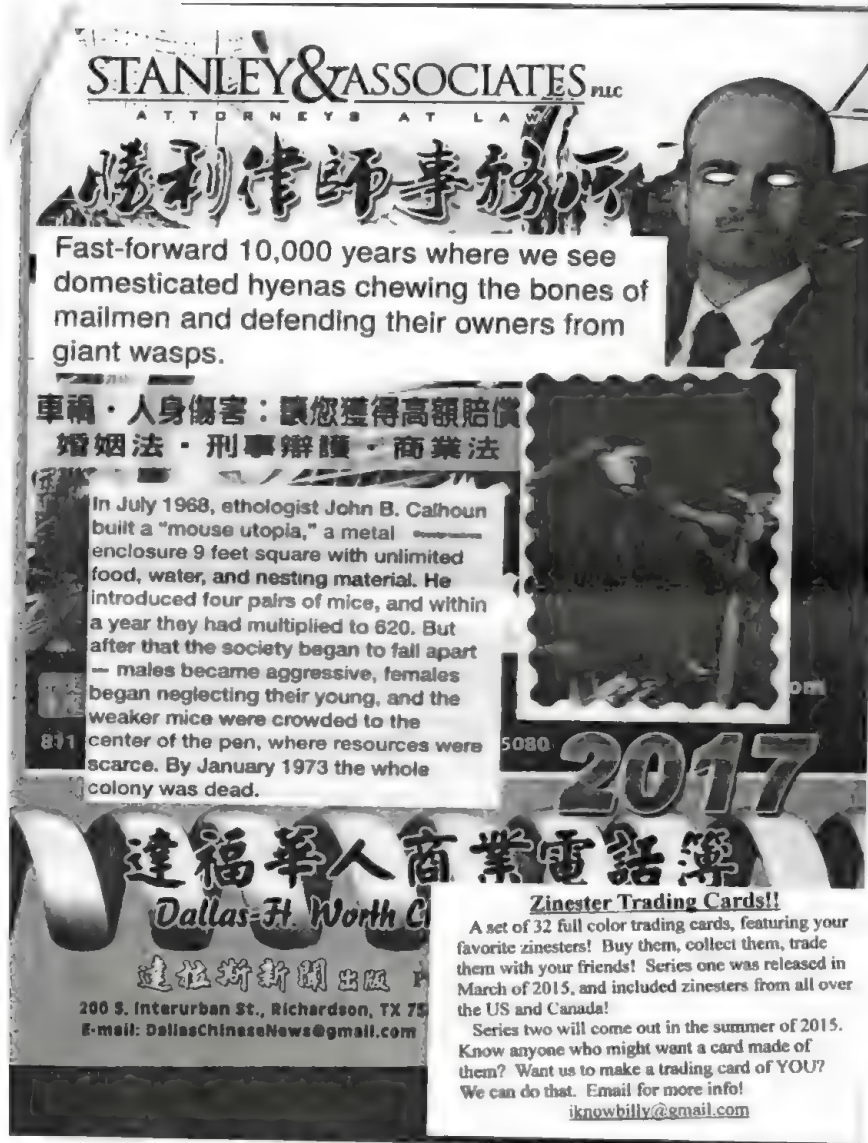
Tastrom's guide, "Fat hacks at the doctors," as essential reading for any fat person looking to navigate the traumas of medical care with (relatively) more ease — or, at least, preparation).

The zine itself is a little haphazardly thrown together and, likewise, the illustrations could be described — for lack of a better term — as technically lacking, but the rhetoric and positioning of this zine is never lost. Tastrom themselves

notes that the labour of producing a zine requires spoons already expended by those suffering from chronic illness, no doubt. While *Chronic Illness Girl* is by no means going to take home any medals for its visual aesthetic or complex storytelling, its merits in terms of real-world resources and truth of experience make me inclined to say "show me the lie." Gold star. (Sarah-Tai Black)

Excerpt

from Koogmo
by Anthony Abelaye



Reviewed on page 30



Don't Tell Me to Smile

Comic, Dana Kearley,
danakearley.com, \$5

I don't know what it is about summer (maybe it's the pollen, maybe it's the 99 cent fountain drinks, maybe it's the way my face and body are not wrapped in layers of down, wool and Gortex) but every year around this time, I start to hear from strange men who have suggestions about what I should be doing or not doing. It happens other times of the year too, but there is something about summer that makes every rando with a mouth decide he needs to interrupt my day to share his opinion of my appearance or behaviour. One of the most frequent and most annoying suggestions is that I smile. If I'm in an environment where it feels safe to do so, my most frequent response is, "Go fuck yourself." I ran out of patience for this shit 20 years ago, which might be why I'm much more aggressively direct than the women in Dana's comic. There are women with a thousand eyes who say, "Go away," and tug their mouths wide with middle fingers, "Smiling 4 U," as something dark and oozing drips from the corners. The people in the collection of single-panel comics are rendered in crisp line drawings with stark captions and I love Dana's understated yet intricate drawing style. My favourite was a hand with long dark fingernails clutching a hot dog with the words, "If you sexualize my veggie dog, I will squirt you with ketchup." Bless you, Dana, I'll never feel weird about eating a hot dog or banana in public again as long as I have condiment packets at the ready. (Mary Green)



Gloom Serially

Comic, 24 pgs, Part 1, Deep Madder Press,
\$5, deepmadder.com

Looking sorta *South Park*-ish, *Gloom Serially* is a cool self-referential comic. It's light on action and heavy on wordiness. The main characters ponder some weighty questions ("So what the fuck is life?") and some less important ones ("Do you need a hug?"). There seems to be academic underpinnings to *Gloom Serially*.

One of the characters talks about teaching a zine course at the University of Toronto. Another talks about being a TA. Again, lots of wordiness and dialogue, much of it rooted in insecurity and punctuated with plenty of non-gratuitous swearing. The zine also examines the social currency within platonic hugging between friends, and the ways in which this can differ if you're a boy versus if you're a girl. So basically, this comic looks at some big, 5,000-foot issues but also drills things down via banal everyday conversation, spliced with angst and (again) insecurity. It takes a few reads to get a decent grasp on the structure, but paired with some pretty strong illustrations, *Gloom Serially* works well. It gives the

reader some clean, clear illustrations to look at, even at times when the characters become completely insufferable. This does happen on occasion. (Cam Gordon)



Minor Leagues 2 & 3

Comic, Simon Moreton, 88 & 68 pgs,
smoo-comics.com, £3-4

Minor Leagues is British comic artist and zinester Simon Moreton's ongoing zine series. While they don't necessarily

Excerpt

from Minor Leagues
by Simon Moreton



Reviewed on page 41

follow any straightforward story or theme, they're telling of Moreton's passing whims, reflections, and interests as an illustrator. Moreton has a trademark minimalist style, mixing thick, splotchy texture scribbles with thin and wispy gestures and half finished shapes. Having watched him since his full length book *Plans We Made*, I'm excited by the growth and direction this approach has taken — sometimes the sparseness is not minimal at all in *Minor Leagues 2 & 3*, with busy pages and panels. Some slices of the zines, especially #3, come in the

form of comics — four or six square panels telling the story of a day, a walk, a thought. Other times they're looser, landscape impressions of people lounging in the park or wandering around a cemetery. Unlike many comics, the rare moments of speech or sound effects in the comics float alongside the scribbles and shapes seamlessly, floating in the backgrounds and corners. However, pages of just text also occur, episodic and poetic blips that sometimes ground, or sometimes contrast the drawings in the pages that follow or precede. There's

something about Simon Moreton's quiet observations and unique style that are magnetic to me. Here's to more *Minor Leagues*. (Jonathan Valelly)



People Who Eat Alone

Comic, Josue Mejivar, 32 pages,
freshbrewedillustration.com, \$10

Excerpt

from *People Who Eat Alone*
by Josue Mejivar



Reviewed on page 42

A recent study from Halifax's Dalhousie University suggests that close to 40 per cent of Canadians eat lunch at their desk. The visual: sad, office drones half-heartedly plunking away at their laptops while simultaneously scarfing or cramming some unseemly matter or food into slack-jawed maws. It's an unsettling image, but one that would be right at home in *People Who Eat Alone*, likely the comic with the most literal title of anything you'll read about in *BP* this month.

Hot take: I really, really love this comic. It totally nails the nuance of an experience we've all shared at one time or another: the dread and banality of eating alone in any number of circumstances: the cabbie in between calls, the hospital guest, the comic dweeb, the heartbroken 20-something. Whether these characters are self-medicating with munchies or simply eating to exist, this is a classic snapshot of the human condition and Mejivar captures the mood perfectly with zero attitude and two feet (plus pens and pencils) firmly planted in reality.

Seriously, this is one of the best comics I've even seen about humanity and there aren't even any words in it — just people, piles of food, some beverages and spaces to think, chew, swallow, repeat and wait until the next meal. Just real as heck in many, many ways. (Cam Gordon)

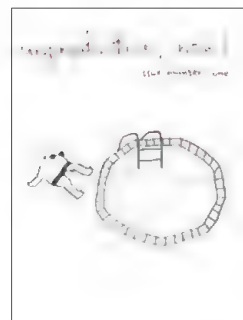


Read More Comix #2

Comic, David Craig,
Robb Mirsky and James Spencer, #2,
24 pgs, readmorecomix.com, \$7

The fine folks at *Read More Comix* have spat out their second comic collection, compiling works from artists David Craig, Robb Mirsky, and James Spencer. These colourful comics might have a mature audiences warning on the cover, but don't be concerned: they aren't gratuitous in any

respect. They're smart, colourful and complementary in all the right ways. The packaging and design is completely top notch too. It looks and feels like a traditional comic with high-quality glossy cover and crisp illustrations. Content? Well... bras, bricks and cigarettes make appearances. Almost every comic is surreal in some respect, but collectively, there's also humanity and heart, since the comics also touch on relationships, family, education and other fundamental topics. They're all great in my opinion, but Spencer's "The Dry Spell" might be my favourite: a sad tale of a relationship gone awry while on vacation, and probably the comic most firmly rooted in reality of the bunch. I also very much like the twin comics about Brick, detailing how this building-material-as-superhero kicks ass in the city and helps families. It's great too. (Cam Gordon)



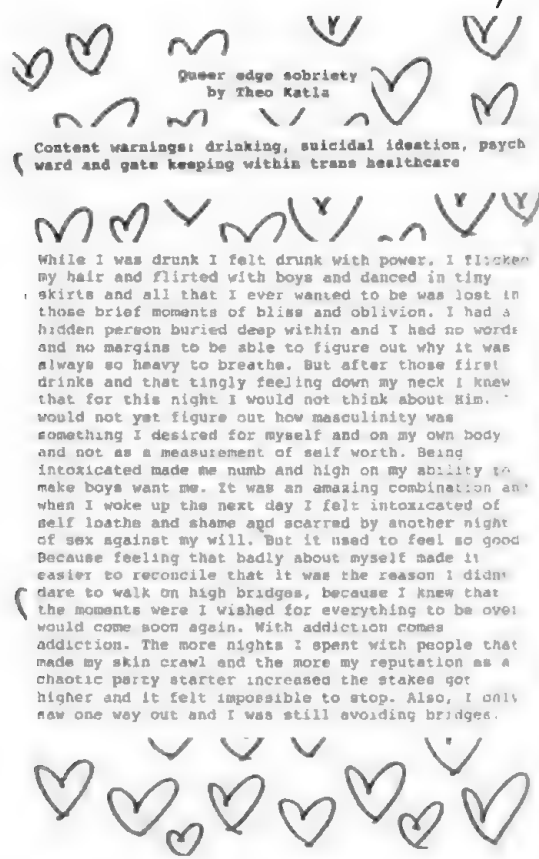
Unproductive, Now!

Comic, Issue 1, Robee Sloe, 24 pgs,
readunproductivecomics.tumblr.com, \$3

In a wonderfully satisfying collection of concise, minimalist, black and white single page comic strips, Robee Sloe demonstrates apparent mastery of the unwittingly self-effacing character — if such a thing is possible. There is page after page of incredible biting humour, with jokes revolving around the sadness and obliviousness of the distinctive-looking humanoid characters that

Excerpt

from Sober Queers Do Exist by Theo Katla

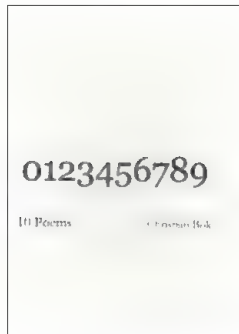


star in each strip. They are pitiable, neckless, bipedal things with mouths at the same latitude as their eyes, perhaps most closely resembling frogs walking upright, but certainly not intended as anything known to our world. I'm just going to call them frogpeople. Hope that's cool.

Robee accomplishes remarkably expressive faces and body language from them. In one strip, over the course of six borderless panels, a frogperson watches an earthworm writhe about. As the panels progress, the frogperson's face contorts more and more, until they angrily shout: "What the hell is wrong with you?!"

Some of Robee's comics are quicker and more subtle; there's plenty here that could easily be at home in the *New Yorker*. My favorite is a single-panel comic: two frogpeople in t-shirts, one reading "kewl," the other "super kewl." The former points to the latter, asking "Where did you get this?" Clearly my telling it in a review isn't as great or as funny as seeing it in real life — so you should find this and follow Robee's Tumblr. (Joshua Barton)

LITZINES AND CHAPBOOKS



10 Poems

Chapbook, Christian Bök,
16 pgs, above/ground press,

www.abovegroundpress.blogspot.ca, \$4

Christian Bök has become, since the popularity and critical success of his 2001 *Eunoia*, something of a (divisive) household name in Canadian poetry. It is likely that anyone already familiar with his work has a strong opinion on it, and it is equally likely that *10 Poems* will further entrench

that opinion, whether it be positive or negative. I happen to really enjoy *Eunoia*, Bök, and — no surprise — *10 Poems*.

These poems extend Bök's method of linguistic play into a few new interesting corners. In "The Doomsday Song," he formats comic-book style onomatopoeia (think "KROOM! KROOM! KRAKOOOM! / KRAKA-DOOM! KA-DOOM!") into a kind of table of contents, bridging the gap between his deconstruction of English and his tension between language-heard and language-read. In his "Phonological Key," printed as a poem in itself, he deliberately guides the reader through missteps, so that the pronunciation of subsequent poems is always off-kilter. If "u = 'oo' as in lute" for instance, then the "blubbering / rubber gut" in the following poem must be pronounced "bloobering roober goot."

Bök's work here then is as opaque as you ask it to be. He places pointed stress on the English language in an effort to

Excerpt

from President Toilet

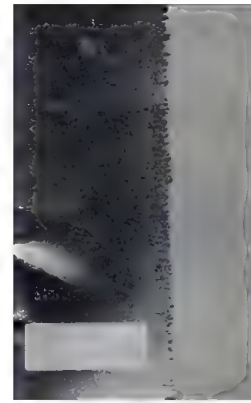


decentre it, and the result is a series of poems that are as familiar as they are foreign. I have encountered many who find this frustrating, but just as many who appreciate the game being played. I find myself in the latter category, and

recommend above/ground press's printing of Bök just as heartily as I would Coach House's or Northwestern University's. (Joel W. Vaughan)

Excerpt

from President Toilet



Anno Zombie Dance

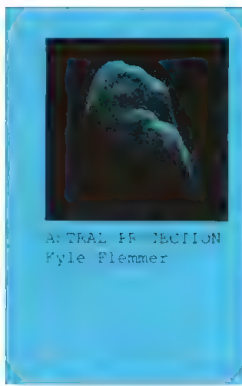
Chapbook, Spencer Gordon, 24 pgs,
The Emergency Response Unit,
theemergencyresponseunit.com, \$10

Spencer Gordon is clearly not concerned that he may be dating his work. He uses the current vernacular with relish: "Baby Huey shows more natural dexterity than a bored Gen-Z tween / illuminating a Snapchat face-swap."

He isn't worried about gloom in his poems, either. Death touches nearly every one of these creations, and *Anno Zombie Dance* is also dominated by a cynical view of the ways we use the Internet. Gordon's tone is reminiscent of David McGimpsey's writing — comedic at a glance, but acerbic at its core: "Today, I see an animal online, I dive for cover. / It's going to be unbearably cute or it's going // to be torture."

This collection's most seductive piece is written from the perspective of wrestler "Macho Man" Randy Savage, and details the premature deaths of some of the WWE's most famous names. If you watched wrestling in the '80s, it'll propel you to the Internet to look up some of the more interesting ones (thereby confirming Gordon's views on the ways we interact with the online world): "Dino Bravo... shot by the mob seventeen times."

Despite all the death and cynicism, these poems find a way to teem with life. "Alright," Gordon concludes in his final entry, "I'd rather be alive / than dead — I guess." (Scott Bryson)



Astral Projection

Chapbook, Kyle Flemmer, 22 pgs,
above/ground press,
abovegroundpress.blogspot.com, \$4

Reading this collection tends to produce the sensation that you're in the thick of that old Atari game, *Asteroids*. Stanzas — fragments, really — are spread around the page like tumbling space rocks.

While the disjointed text makes for a more entertaining read, it can also be difficult at times. It's not always easy to tell which direction your eyes should be heading. The clunky formatting choices are obviously meant to mirror the subjects of Kyle Flemmer's poems: 24 Themis, 87 Sylvia, 10 Hygiea and their brethren — the largest asteroids in the asteroid belt that lies between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.

In addition to remarking on the asteroids' location and makeup — "Note the / sublimated surface / ice" — Flemmer explores the origins of their names, in Greek mythology: "Rhea Silvia: / vestal virgin / mother of twins / (by a war god)." It brings the asteroids to life, and assigns motivation to their actions in space: "She has the brightest radar / albedo in the asteroid belt... & if anyone dared / become immortal / it would be she."

The creativity in this collection lies more in the arrangement of the text than in the text itself — much of this is readily available information. The chapbook's title doesn't make an appearance until the very end, but the way Flemmer marries science with mythology is his way of carrying out a sort of astral projection. There's more going on here than meets the eye. (Scott Bryson)

Born to Rant, Coerced to Smile

Chapbook, Philip Kienholz, 32 pgs,
New Roots Press, newrootspress.ca, \$10

That title sounds like it should be on a Jewel album, but it's apt; Philip Kienholz's ranting days are clearly behind him: "I loaf at my ease," he announces. "I could rise / and go now, but / there / is no need." It

doesn't sound much like coercion. He went willingly.

Born to Rant, Coerced to Smile is divided into "clusters" of poems, and the first set clearly lays out the placid turn his life has taken (his bio tells that he was ordained a lay monk and spent three years developing a meditation retreat): "Moments when we recognize deepest connections... dried leaf that

Excerpt

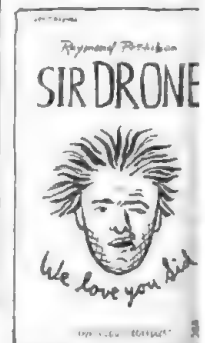
from Terminal Boredom: The Early Years #2
by Rich Kroneiss

DEATH IS A FAR OUT TRIP

Four films by Raymond Pettibon

by Sarah Janet

In 1989, artist Raymond Pettibon — perhaps best known among punks for his flyers and zines, not to mention being Greg Ginn's brother — made four movies: *The Whole World Is Watching*, *Weatherman '69*, *Judgment Day Theater: The Book of Manson*, *Citizen Tania*, and *Sir Drone*. Starring a revolving cast of punk rock scenesters at the time, they form somewhat of a loose series focusing on the darker side of the hippie era and California culture, with an emphasis on cults and subcultural movements: the Weather Underground, the Manson Family, Patty Hearst, and the Symbionese Liberation Army, and punk rock. In a way, they feel like Pettibon's drawings come to life — the ones with naked people with Xs on their foreheads, hippies throwing themselves out of windows during a bad trip, slogans scrawled on the walls in blood — accompanied with witty, biting commentary.



The films seem almost impressionistic, with a general foundation in fact but mostly based on feeling and atmosphere. One of my favorite aspects is the "celebrity cameos", where legendary figures turn up out of nowhere. When Allen Ginsberg shows up unannounced at the Weathermen's bunker, Jeff Jones dryly tells him "You just missed John Lennon," which, whether intentional or not, sounds as if he's making fun of the whole phenomenon. And it's pretty sure Jimi Hendrix never jammed with Manson, a scene that's never set up or explained, though it's one of my favorite



These are very much DIY endeavors, created cheaply on home video equipment with stark and unadorned sets, with cast members helping out with camerawork and editing (Dave Markley gets a co-director's credit on *Citizen Tania*). Pettibon doesn't seem concerned about lighting or sound or good acting, or even if it's interesting for the viewer — many scenes are long and drawn out, with Charlie Manson delivering rambling, insane preachings for ten minutes straight (he appears to be the only one who's memorized his lines). A scene on a windy roof makes the dialogue inaudible. Lighting and volume are inconsistent from one cut to the next. The actors read off of cue cards. And yet this all contributes to a particular style, whether by choice or necessity or a little bit of both. Each movie begins and ends with a simple title screen consisting of that pixelated black letter font that finds its way into most 1980s home videos, with the exception of *Sir Drone*, they

Reviewed on page 36

claims part of us, and we part of bubbling and / frothing creek part of water everywhere." Gaia is mentioned. It's perfectly viable subject matter for poetry, but the sort of thing you probably won't enjoy unless you're of a similar mindset.

A few drug related — and probably drug-fueled — poems follow, which border on nonsensical, including this nod to LSD: "i c th / shadoezuvmen /actnliik-buildingz // they muuv / lookstrongpeepl / tiirduvwaking // wahoo lustre crème." The centrepiece of the collection is a multi-page mind bender about a baseball player who's trying to think up a new pitch, and instead falls into some sort of transcendental downward spiral.

Born to Rant, Coerced to Smile is an eclectic mix of both form and subject matter. While it's not always suave or technically savvy, it's at least entertaining. (Scott Bryson)



Pioneer 10, I Hear You

Chapbook, Donna Kane, 18 pgs,
Jack Pine Press, jackpinepress.com, \$30

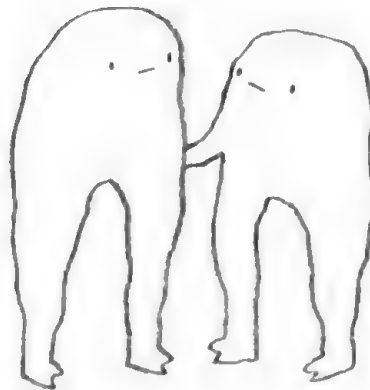
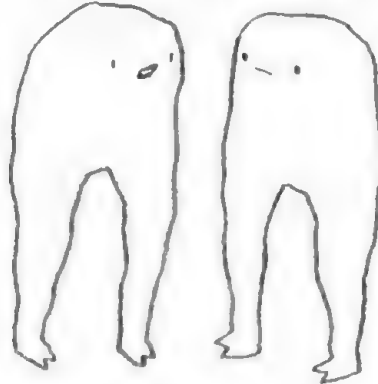
Jack Pine typically produces uniquely-covered chapbooks, and they, Donna Kane, and designers kit fast and mazy mottishaw have raised the bar with this one. *Pioneer 10, I Hear You* is coated in the gold foil of a Space brand emergency blanket, and there's an attached bookmark that's made from the film of a cassette of David Bowie's *Space Oddity*.

True to its title, this poetry collection is a love letter to the Pioneer 10 space probe, launched in 1972, now unreachable, and hurtling out of our solar system. It's clear Kane is experiencing kinship with the probe on some level: "I could

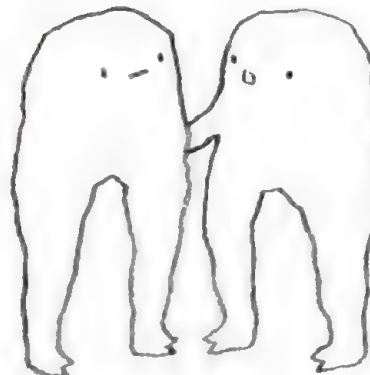
Excerpt

from *Unproductive Now*
by Robee Sloe

you know when you feel
like no one really gets you?



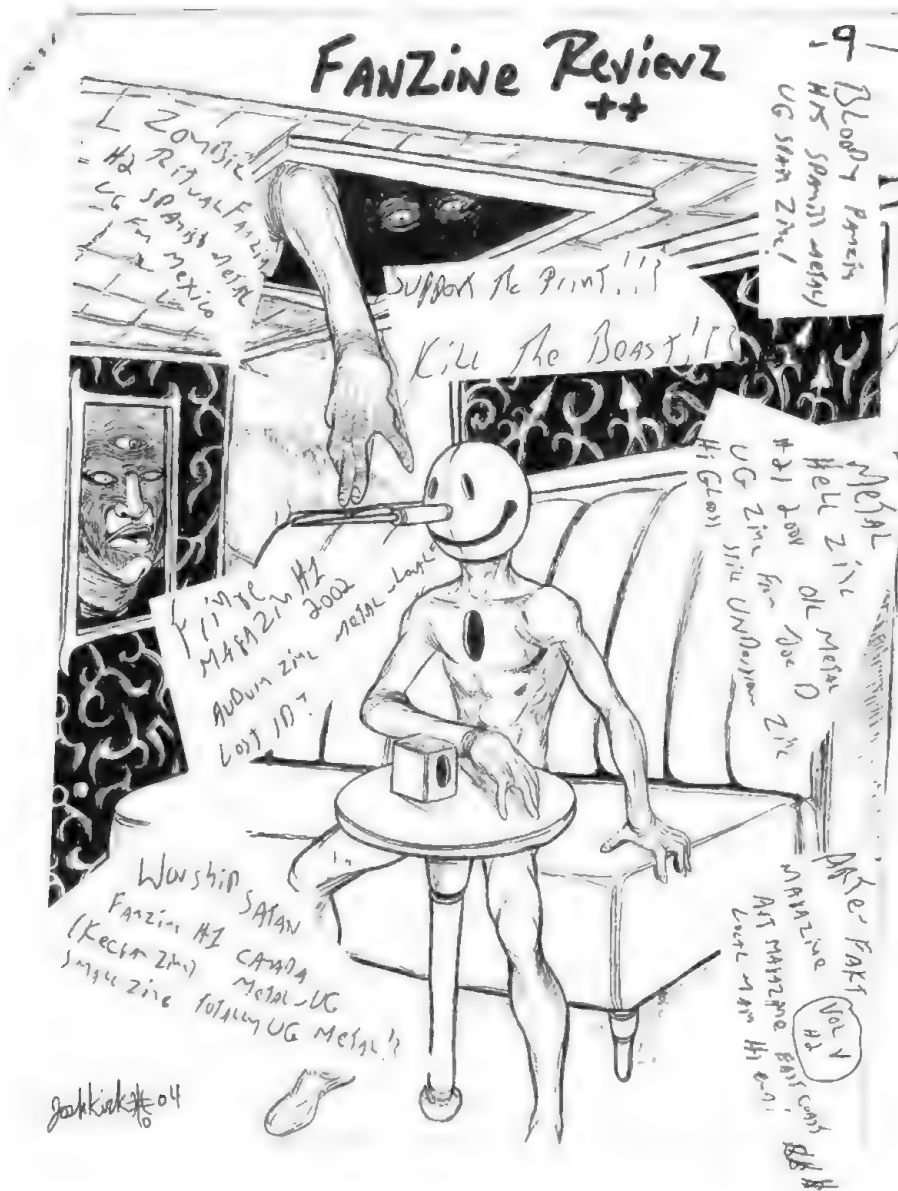
no.



She later shifts to the probe's perspective, as it drafts a letter to its scientist parents: "I know I still haunt / the glow of your nightlights... the data / on your pulsing blue screens / is not how it appears to me." The scientists provide their own letter in retort: "Listen. You knew what this was...

Kane isn't the first to write a poem about Pioneer 10 (a Google search reveals some melancholy rhyming couplets), but she may be the only person to dedicate an entire collection to the subject, and her attempts to humanize the drifting relic pay off. *Pioneer 10, I Hear You* is a clever and educational homage. (Scott Bryson)

from Wormhole
by Penn Yan



The treatment of these issues seems to come from lived experience and the poems are often nuanced as a result. Take, for example, Rebecca Zala's "In Tagalog I bawl afraid / In English I have found my strength / employers now they see my grit / finally I have earned respect" coming up against Dani Magsumbol's "My English tongue - full fluency - / Has opened many doors for me / But Tagalog is part of me, / I wish I'd learned from infancy." Other pieces, like Casey Garcia's hip-hop influenced "Distant Relatives," are able to tackle the same subject matter as effectively, and with an additional sense of playfulness (see: "I'm hungry! I wanna eat! /

I'm here to get us a piece! — / And I never had foot fetishes, / Hate the taste of defeat.”)

In all, “PSL” is a varied collection with a few worthwhile throughlines. Kapisanan makes an excellent presentation of its participants’ work, and a solid case for this kind of workshop. (Joel W. Vaughan)

Subliminal White Trash: Neglected Writings

Litzine, Kevin C. Pearce, 3 pgs,
subliminalwhitetrash.blogspot.com,
price not listed

Pearce attacks these three copy-sized pages with surprising variety: “Neglected

writings” contains three pieces of flash-fiction, 21 proverbs, and seven scenes of dialogue — which he calls “comedy skits.” The zine throws everything at the wall, no matter how absurd or abrasive, and hopes something will stick. Unfortunately, not much does.

The problem lies not only in an approach which crams as much unrelated content as possible into an already confined space, but in the modus-operandi of its author. When the narrative voice is not waxing unnecessarily caustic (see: “Massage my fuckin stupid guts. Stress whores gone. In the zone. Fuckin holy fuck. Shit is BUTTER.”), it is condescending. The short story “BORED,”

for instance, begins “You don’t eat meat. Don’t tell me why. I will most definitely get bored. Yes, I forgot to notice that you’re eccentric. Very, very eccentric. Frightening.” It is unfortunate that such a sentiment is not the exception to the rule, here; Pearce’s literary approach to this zine might be summed up in his own proverb: “Don’t get too close to me. My bullshit filter is strong.”

This kind of “bullshit filter” cannot help but feel just as holier-than-thou as the yuppies it seeks to diminish. It makes for edgy narrative, but little else. (Joel W. Vaughan)

Excerpt

from Write or Die
by Papyrus Collective

It's you! me

Unbeknownst to me, I received a letter from my son
three, four months since we've held a
serious conversation. But as I tore through the
envelope, something didn't seem right. The writing
was off. It was the first paragraph I couldn't stop.
The son's name, father, my boy is getting married.
And having a kid at his soon.

Then outta nowhere he told me that he loves
me. And he needs my help. Now I'm speaking! "Dad"
he said "I wanna be the right thing by her & my
kid. But I don't love her, I'm in love with someone
else. Who makes me feel alive, who I actually
want to marry. Mom is on board with me
following my heart so is grandma. But how
can you tell me & your opinion means the world to
me dad. You've never lied to me nor abandoned
me in my time of need. Therefore, please don't stop
loving when you read these words, I'm gay "Dad"

At that moment, I felt like I just got shot right
in my heart. Once I was able to put my ego in
check, I picked up my newspaper to reach out and
he ensure him that if he's in love with someone
else than his child's mother, he owes her a recent
why! Another thing, regardless how may feel
he true to yourself. Do it your in love with another
man, you'll never have to worry about that
part of your life, bearing any weight on our
relationship. Even though I don't love it, I love you
though!! I may feel some type of way at times
and have my own views about your new coming
... We may disagree or even agree on some issues.
I ask you to continue to be patient with me.
Because I wanna give you the respect you
deserve and deserve, as I show you unconditional love
my son. Love my son, gay or not, I shall always love you.
Unconditionally. Dad, your son.





Illustration: Dennis Oba / www.denn-oba.com

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CANADA'S MUSIC AUTHORITY

TOMORROW'S MUSIC AND POP CULTURE. TODAY. ALL DAY



B.A. Johnston

Gremlins 3

Wyatt Records

[wyattrecords.com](#)

Hamilton, Ontario's "failed showman on the skids" is still writing about video games, TV and movies, but if this 2017 Polaris Prize-longlisted latest batch of songs is any indication, B.A. Johnston's life currently revolves around fast food and alcohol (in substantial quantities). Instant classics like "I Need Donair Sauce" and "Dave Says No Drinking In The Backseat" demonstrate Johnston's continuing dedication to documenting the ridiculous shit we get into and up to, but would never admit to. It's incredible that this shtick is still fresh after 11 albums.

Jon McKiel

Memorial Ten Count

You've Changed

[youvechanged.com](#)

Jon McKiel is a divided man. He has mellowed considerably over the course of three full-lengths, and often approaches the contemplative territory of the Two Minute Miracles, but he still lingers on the verge of launching into Constantines-like outbursts. On *Memorial Ten Count*, songs waver between resignation and antagonism: one minute he's contemplating the weather, and the next he's railing against an American police state. Whichever side of Jon McKiel you prefer, his tantalizingly cryptic lyrics will keep you coming back to this one.



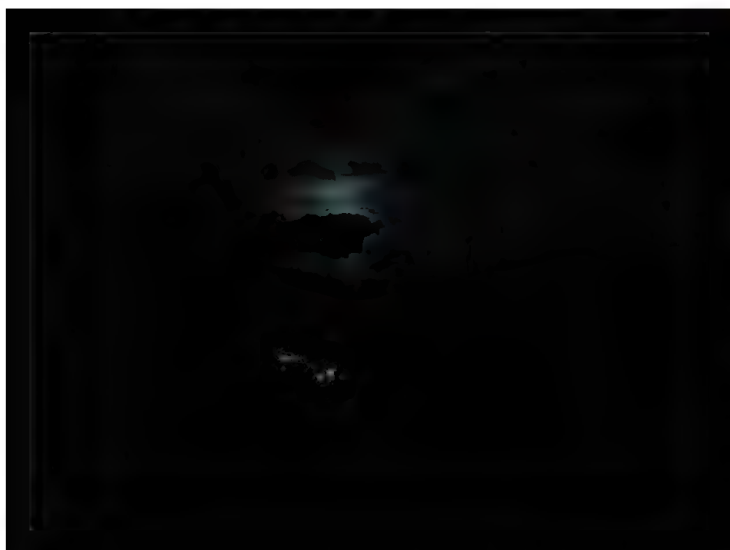
Construction & Destruction

Noli Timere

Independent

[constructionanddestruction.ca](#)

Who are they trying to fool, with that title? *Noli Timere* — Latin for "Don't be afraid" — opens with what can only be described as horror movie chase music that's repeatedly interrupted by Colleen Collins screeching "Peace! Agency!" You could call Construction & Destruction's 2013 album, *Dark Lark*, a pop record compared to this sparse and haunted affair. *Noli Timere* is substantially more poetic and esoteric than their recent output, but if you're familiar with the Nova Scotian duo, this should be up your alley. Newcomers: be afraid. (All reviews by Scott Bryson)



FICTION



Arms from the Sea

Rich Shapero, 193 pgs, TooFar Media,
richshapero.com, US\$9.99

Rich Shapero is best known for having made a lot of money doing the California tech thing and then using some of that cash — which would be a fortune to most — to self-publish and market a book called *Wild Animus*. Years ago, my uncle gave me a copy, with an accompanying themed music CD, which he'd been given for free at, I believe, an airport. If I remember correctly, the main guy has an ecstasy-epiphany involving a jet of lava and a deer antlers hat.

Arms from the Sea wasn't nearly as bad as I was expecting. Don't get me wrong — it's terrible — but Shapero's prose is quite decent when limited to physical description.

"Where are you taking me?" Lyle asked the bird. It turned toward him, copper eye glaring, impenetrable. The beak looked weathered, carved from fossilized bone. The jowls trembled as if about to speak, then the neck feathers bristled and the bird faced forward."

Not bad!

Lyle, the protagonist, is a masculine dissident in a typical dystopia called the State of Salt — because there's salt everywhere. He carves sea creatures out of blocks of salt, memorializing a precedent sea civilization. He then has a drug dream/shock therapy/actual-entry-into-a-spiritual-realm experience, whereby he ends up in a sea heaven realm, and has repetitious interactions with a god that talks like a corporate spiritualist life coach.

Shapero has nothing to say yet is constantly trying to be profound. His world is more magic than realism, with a creation story that makes no significant reference to any pre-existing mythology. So, we learn less about ourselves than about made-up sea creatures.

Shapero does have some skill with language, and a lot of ambition, and ought to devote it to a novel about the tech bubble in the early 2000s. He knows about that and his overheated imagination might render a real event vivid and surreal in a good way. I'd read *that* novel. (Feliks Jezioranski)



Broken Balloons

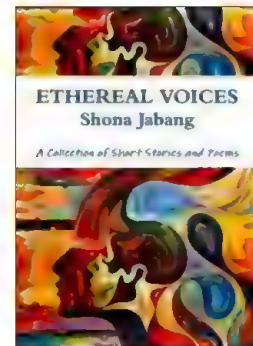
Gail Prussy, 104 pgs, Exile Editions,
exileeditions.com, \$19.95

If you're in search of nightmarish illustrations, delightfully strange poems and spooky stories, you will find them in Gail Prussy's beautifully executed volume. *Broken Balloons* starts with an interview with the author by filmmaker David Cronenberg. That even Cronenberg, the master of body horror, appears to bore Prussy says a great deal about the audacity and individuality that goes into her lurid work.

Strange and misshapen insects populate the pages of her collection, as well as hellish beasts, unusual human characters, colourful paintings tinted with dread, and unsettling writing. In a darkly amusing poem titled "My Cassowary," a pet owner regrets that their murderous feathered friend must go into the oven. In "Insomnia," the narrator describes the many unstoppable thoughts that come to mind in the middle of the night until early morning, and wanting to "poke out both

[their] eyes" by the end of it. "The Beautiful Asshole," told from the point of view of the titular asshole, provides an account of the immense egotism of such a person when they try to describe their own beauty.

This fantastic volume belongs on the coffee table of any nightmare-having, horror-loving, cheerfully cynical weirdo who delights in morose illustrations, art, and poetry. Prussy's book recalls Alvin Schwartz and Stephen Gammell's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. If you were a fan of those books as a child, you will delight in this wonderfully creepy artwork as a grown up. (Nicole Partyka)



Ethereal Voices: A Collection of Short Stories and Poems

Shona Jabang, 360 pgs, lulu.com, \$20.76

Shona Jabang's collection of poems, essays, and short stories transports you from Jamaica to England, to the United States and The Gambia.

Ethereal Voices opens with "Sister, Sister" where a young Pearl's enchanted relationship with her mother is ruined by the birth of her sister, and she is left behind in Jamaica as her parents migrate to England. The story anchors the book, exploring primordial emotions, complex family dynamics, and how citizens (victims) of colonialism are often reduced to marching around the world in search of "something better."

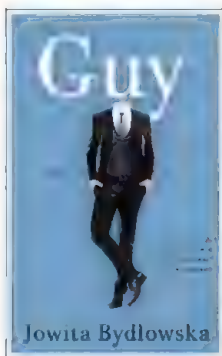
The most notable story is "The Dream" in which a 13-year-old girl, whose mother had her at age 11 and mysteriously

abandoned her, is sleepwalking and taken by her grandmother to see the obeah man, unraveling a horrifying family secret.

The stories, sometimes taking the form of verse or poetic memoirs, weave together themes of migration, violence, and returns, often punctuated by poetic lines, such as “She was Eve opening Adam’s eyes” and “She is Universe. / The sound the planets hum when they are at peace. / She is cosmic cohesion and the Force of Gravity / She is simply, My Grandmother,” as seen in “Gran,” a stunning elegy that displays the immeasurable strength of diasporic grandmothers touched by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Jabang discusses colonialism, gendered violence, class, respectability and shade politics rampant in Jamaica. Readers are taken to other times and places such as the U.S. in the 1920s and 9/11. Instead of presenting the usual Caribbean, Jabang paints a complicated picture of Jamaica and diasporic living that attempts to grapple with what it means to be Caribbean and British. Characters struggle with their relationship to the Motherland, which, no longer Africa, has been replaced by England.

One should be warned, however, that Jabang undoes her good work a bit with her penultimate piece, a two-part essay, which sheds light on the living truth of the forgoing stories. (Fiona Raye Clarke)



Guy

Jowita Bydlowska, 264 pgs,
Buckrider Books,
wolsakandwynn.com, \$20

I was drawn to Jowita Bydlowska’s novel because I wanted to find a protagonist to

look down on, to make me feel morally superior. *Guy* certainly delivered that in abundance.

Guy is about a guy called Guy. He is a narcissist and misogynist that likes to rank women by their appearance on a scale of one to 10. While one might think a man like Guy would only go for beautiful women — ranked seven or higher — his real pleasure comes from seducing the supposedly less attractive. Why? He feels that beautiful women expect something from him — like love and genuine affection — and that they fail to recognize the true glory that is Guy. Unattractive women see him as he sees himself — as “God’s gift” — and he finds them way less needy; the mere pleasure of being with him is good enough and, according to Guy, that’s the way it should be.

The way that Bydlowska dives into Guy’s mind feels so natural that it’s unsettling. While disturbing and disgusting, Guy’s internal narrative is pretty hilarious, but in that same dark and perverse way that *Seinfeld* is funny. Bydlowska is careful not to let comedy undercut the loathsome nature at the root of her story: this type of toxic masculinity is very real and very dangerous. It takes great skill to create a balanced narrative like this, and Bydlowska proves that she has this in spades.

That being said, the novel’s climax is extremely problematic. While I’m all for bad things happening to bad people, the method in which karma manifests poses numerous ethical questions. I found the whole thing jarring and problematic for the real-world implications such comeuppance creates. So, reader be warned: *Guy* is an entertaining and well-crafted read that will definitely leave a terribly bad taste in your mouth. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)



Mad Richard

Lesley Krueger, 328 pgs, ECW Press,
ecwpress.com, \$18.95

Lesley Krueger’s novel tracks the rise and fall of painter Richard Dadd; the latter years of Charlotte Brontë’s life, after she lost the last of her siblings; and touches on the success and personality of Charles Dickens. *Mad Richard* is a book of elaborate character sketches; but by being episodic, it sometimes snuffs its own momentum and is inconclusive about many questions it raises. Regardless, my patience was rewarded, and I came to love Krueger’s writing.

There were early soundings of the source of Richard’s neurosis. When remembering his family tackling Shakespeare, Richard thought his father had read all the parts, “until last year, when he’d caught a weird fireside flicker of their mother’s smile on [his elder sister] Rebecca’s lips and realized their mother must have read parts as well. It came to him that he had no idea what she’d been like.” Inverse to such sad thoughts, when comparing himself to Dickens, Richard later portrays himself as unfettered: “He began pausing as he painted, worried that he hadn’t any anger in him, no chip on his shoulder he dared you to knock off, no sense of neglect to nip his bollocks and give him a raging, urgent sense of momentum.”

Psychology is for Krueger a matter of intricate detail: as Richard gains skill, she writes knowledgeably about painting techniques, as she does about the literature and theatre of the time. Krueger’s technical insights into art accompany other ones into political and social trends

of the time, which connect Dadd to Bronte and her literary and personal dilemmas. Impending spinsterhood forces Charlotte to consider a suitor “beneath” her, Nicholls. His proposal, made pale and trembling, “she’d been touched to find was entirely based on his love for her private self rather than her reputation.” After scenes where Nicholls is rejected by Charlotte, as well as browbeaten by her proud father, comes one of my favourite passages in the book: when she invites him back to her and he says, “Hullo then. You came... Belatedly hearing what he said, Charlotte realizes that Mr. Nicholls had walked forty miles without being certain she would meet him.”

We feel Charlotte’s loneliness just as strongly, and her story is the lone arc telegraphed from start to satisfying resolution. That its tidy progression is in contrast to the other subplots implies the main flaw of a marvellous novel, a flaw absent from many inferior books. (Felix Jezioranski)



Two Man Tent

Robert Chafe, 216 pgs, Breakwater Books,
breakwaterbooks.com, \$19.95

The debut short story collection from Newfoundland-based playwright Robert Chafe takes on the questions of longing and possibility inherent to distance, whether it be emotional or physical. The intimate proximity referenced in the book’s title is belied by, in story after story, attempts to negotiate chasms between fathers and sons, next-door neighbours, and distant lovers.

Chafe is a talented writer with a

particular patience for chipping away at the surface of a situation. Nuances of neuroticism, loneliness, and fear simmer behind each story — an inevitable, eventual interference. In a story about an older man living in social isolation who refuses to evacuate despite an incoming forest fire, Chafe describes the moment where stubborn avoidance, at long last, is no longer tenable: “He saw it across the top of the hill then. What had settled in the previous days into an ever-present and pulsing underlight against the smoke-fed clouds had finally crested the ridge... Now the black of the treed hill against the night sky was cut with an orange scar, the upper bowl of the valley like an edge of smoldering paper.”

Stories like these — pretty much all about men, and often about the violence that comes with hard-learned emotional frigidity and socially enforced silence — make up most of the book, pasted against backgrounds of woods, rock and sea (hey, he is from Newfoundland). But these vignettes are interspersed with an ongoing conversation that is, by all indications, real and from Chafe’s life. Dispatches sail across the continent between the two men, once strangers. Starting with a chat on Scruff, a gay

meetup app, and moving into Gchat, emails, texts and undocumented phone calls, the conversation is at once boring and totally addictive. Indeed, the banality of text flirtation, in the context of loneliness, can become an open vessel for our anxieties and sense of alienation. I read the other stories patiently, but the somewhat gimmicky format of a real-life text message made it hard to pay attention to the prose.

Even though the exchanges between the author and his distant crush, whom he eventually meets, are most often about what they ate that day and whether they should or shouldn’t talk about politics, there’s something still sweet (and perhaps, for this gay reader, too familiar) about the exchanges. I had a hard time not comparing it to *Tex*, Beau Rice’s genius 2014 book using a similar format and conceit. But within this collection it serves a successful fugal note against stories that occasionally feel like repeats of alienation-via-Canadians. The stories in *Two Man Tent* are plain, familiar and light on moments of intense drama but fraught with tension and disappointment. They aren’t life-changing, so they aren’t overwrought, and that’s precisely where their quiet success lies. (Jonathan Vallery)

POETRY



a place called No Homeland

Kai Cheng Thom, 84 pgs, Arsenal Pulp Press,
arsenalpulp.com, \$14.95.

I read Kai Cheng Thom’s *A Place Called No Homeland* at a restaurant over lunch

and immediately regretted it. If you saw a hot mess at Spadina and Dundas St W, that was me. But it’s ok. It was worth it. The collection of poetry is a firework display of courage and victory in the face of aggression. She displays her scars in unexpected frankness and poise, but it turned out to be a touch overwhelming for my casual Toronto lunch.

Her poetry highlights the violence in her personal life and the history of violence in her family. She speaks on everything from queer and Chinese communities in BC, to experiencing rape and colonialism in painfully beautiful language. She approaches these difficult conversations with powerful authority. Kai Cheng Thom demands to be heard and seen in her terms through her work.

She forces us to take another look at Vancouver's Chinatown and the people who live there. She builds a platform for her own voice, and through her, the voice of her family and marginalized communities to make their presence known and celebrated.

"chinese families don't talk about our feelings"/"we wash them down with pork."

We are asked to see the people in her poetry, Kai Cheng Thom's family, the scars they bare and the stories they silence because "what can't be cured must be endured."

Silence is a running theme of Kai Cheng Thom's poetry, but her work is unapologetically loud. She draws our attention to the power of voices and the resilience of the bodies featured in her work. In "trauma is not sacred", Kai Cheng Thom reminds us that "violence is not special pain is not holy suffering does not make angels abuse defines no one you are more than the thing that hurt you you are more than the people you have hurt do not make an altar to your woundedness." Through her poetry, Kai Cheng Thom offers communal celebration to marginal people and a voice of encouragement for transwomen who walk similar paths. (Jean Mathew)



Empathy Eventually

Wesley Dodson, 79 pgs,
Post Occupation Press,
postoccupation.com, \$12

When done correctly, giving space to mere notions can be light, yet telling. Unfortunately, Wesley Dodson's *Empathy Eventually* seems to be

attempting to add depth to every little thought that has come into the poet's head. Why do his readers need to know that a chair sitting far from a table is odd, or that "the colour of the glass is empty"? If these were recorded to help cultivate a richer image, maybe they would hold a little more weight; instead, entire pages are dedicated to 10-word inconsequential poems that hardly deserve the immortalization the printed word offers; there's metaphorical, and then there's just reaching.

To be fair, some of Dodson's notions cast a romantic light on that insomnia and Ouija board heebie-jeebies you can't shake. Brought together by a single clever word or twist, these diamonds in the rough spark the expansion of the author's idea in each reader's mind. Occasionally told from the point of view of someone pondering simple happenings from the comfort of their home, it is both haunting and refreshing to consider "the profound period of darkness between television ads." However, I'd prefer to hear about this topic with Hitchcock's direction, and James Stewart's cool cameras. (Grace Bueler)



False Friends

Stephen Cain, 128 pgs, BookThug,
bookthug.ca, \$18

As I read, I am propelled forward through Cain's poetry, engrossed by never-ending enjambment and captivated by his vast collection of "false friends": words that look or sound similar, but differ significantly in meaning. Comprised of seven distinct sections, *False Friends* provides an often damning, but nevertheless freeing meditation on modernity.

Cain's tone is undaunted and

unapologetic, weaving long lists of alliterative wordplay into his opening segment, simply titled "STANZAS." It's this chapter, in particular, that begs to be read aloud. With quandaries such as, "Moonshine mail, collective climax kinky query, dusky, /a pose arose, concomitant combing, I sit, epiphanies emerge, really rational," the deconstruction of language segues into Cain's own resistant translation of seemingly nonsensical non-sequiturs. The tentative meaning that surfaces during the collision course of text is transient and precious, and the author's ability to tease out signification from these fragments is a gift for which I am grateful.

Most indicative of Cain's unerringly experimental poetry style is "A CO VER LIGHTS," where he has splattered his carefully chosen words across the page into a poststructuralist's dream: a choose-your-own-adventure, but framed as a game of words and their definitions. This expert performance of destabilization and reconfiguration showcases Cain's utter control (or lack thereof) over language. He swapssignifiers — as with the irreverent "DOGMA" in which "dog" becomes "god," — and cleverly toys with everyone's favourite punk bands in the age of technology, "pixilated, here comes your RAM." These poems ceaselessly question their prescribed connotations and they have fun doing it.

Much great poetry requires a negotiation of new worlds, an assessment of innovative structures, or a willingness to abandon all predeterminations. *False Friends* performs these criteria through total upheaval — a rewiring of readers' brains — leaving in its wake both liberation and confusion. (Megan Hamilton)

GRAPHIC NOVELS



Boundless

Jillian Tamaki, 248 pgs,
Drawn & Quarterly,
drawnandquarterly.com, \$27.95

Times are tough, and when they are, anxiety springs eternal. The pressure and burden to just be a functioning and productive person are greater than they've ever been before. Few understand what that does to the minds of the young and confused better than Jillian Tamaki, the Governor General and Eisner

award-winning author of *This One Summer*. Her latest work, *Boundless*, is a collection of short stories that together explore the anxieties and growing pains of adapting to a changing modern world. Tamaki's skills as a storyteller and artist are on full display in each story of this collection, as well as her understanding of the human condition.

Each story stands alone, connected to each other by a common theme of personal unease. In "I. Jenny," a woman obsesses over the life of an alternate version on herself on a mysterious Facebook mirror. Jenny compares her life to her alternate, reflecting our own preoccupation with social media and our tendency to rate our own existences through comparisons to others'. In "Half-Life," Helen mysteriously shrinks to Thumbelina proportions. As Helen shrinks, we can't help but feel small with her and literally fear the idea of nothing.

Like an episode of *Black Mirror*, anxieties are highlighted by the mysterious or fantastical. These elements never overpower or consume the story at hand and always complement the real fears at our cores.

A lot of the feelings Tamaki expresses feel bleak, but they're really just blunt, which can hurt more than reality does. I found comfort and reflection in the stories. The soft images help ease the pain of how stern reality can be, and the careful way Tamaki crafted each of her stories in congruence with her images is art. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)



3 FOR THE SUMMER READING LIST

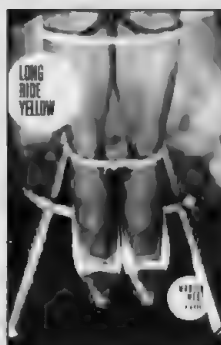


THE THREE PLEASURES by Terry Watada

"Terry Watada's literary tour de force, *The Three Pleasures*, lifts the Japanese Canadian internment experience beyond passive victimization by giving life to a host of historical figures—heroes, villains and tragic characters—in a fascinating yet little-known resistance movement within the camps. An absolute page-turner and worthy read."

—Jim Wong-Chu, Director,
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LONG RIDE YELLOW by Martin West

Long Ride Yellow is the debut novel from two-time Journey Prize finalist Martin West. Nonni is a dominatrix who likes to play. She hates to pay. Her disdain for all that is conventional launches her on a journey of personal discovery: through the local swingers' scene, the world of clandestine S&M clubs, and finally onto the most dangerous diversion of her life.

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YOU ARE NOT NEEDED NOW by Annette Lapointe

You Are Not Needed Now is a brilliant debut collection of stories from Giller-nominated novelist, Annette Lapointe. Despite the diversity, strangeness, and complexity of her characters, Lapointe illustrates a remarkable understanding of each one. She knows them intimately, and gives the reader the gift of knowing them, too.

\$20 | 224 PGS. | 978-1-77214-093-4

info@anvilpress.com | www.anvilpress.com



Crawl Space

Jesse Jacobs, 96 pages, Koyama Press,
koyamapress.com, \$19.95

For Jesse Jacobs' third book with Koyama Press, the path to transcendence begins in the basement laundry room of a suburban home. In *Crawl Space*, two middle school-aged girls discover a portal leading from their drab black-and-white neighbourhood to a vivid otherworld, best described as a petting zoo on *Mario Kart*'s Rainbow Road course. This otherworld, said to be a "higher plane" of reality, is

typically only accessible to the spiritually enlightened, but a *Narnia*-like shortcut in their washer-dryer exposes it to interlopers. Before long, their intrusion begins to trigger dark changes in its peaceful ecosystem.

Crawl Space is thematically of-a-piece with Jacobs' previous graphic novels. He likes to juxtapose the small-minded destructiveness of humanity with the inscrutable plotting of cosmic entities — the closest figures to true gods in his comics are the least human and represented as ever-shifting patterns of matter and colour; divinity seems to rest on shedding individual identity. By *This Shall You Know Him*, *Safari Honeymoon* and now *Crawl Space* are each stories of Edens squandered by human consumption, and the way nature strikes back. They're paradise-lost narratives for the climate change era, albeit leavened by whimsy and body humour. Jacobs' squishy, deformed figure work teeters between cute and creepy, the uncanny and harmless Treasure Trolls and humanoid teapots that inhabit the

otherworld giving way to fanged monstrosities.

Jacobs' projects each employ distinct visual restraints. In the past, he's limited his palette to two or three colours per book, but in *Crawl Space* he works with nine (plus black and white). Yet, he refrains from variation in tint, hue or shade. It's as though the transition to the otherworld splits the traveler's perception of reality into its composite elements, like light through a prism. One character's instructions for navigating this experience could double as Jacobs' process: "Collect a wide variety of [...] shapes. [...] Distribute the pigments proportionately. Arrange them in order of where they belong on the colour spectrum. Assemble the pieces into complex structures. Allow yourself to dissolve into the patterns." The result is another visually arresting book from one of Canada's most distinctive cartoonists. (JM Francheteau)

Room magazine's
CONTEST CALENDAR

Fiction / Poetry

1st Prize: \$1000 + publication / 2nd Prize: \$250 + publication (in each genre)

Judges: Sigal Samuel (fiction) & M. NourbeSe Philip (poetry)

Deadline: July 15, 2017

Cover Art

1st Prize: \$500 + publication on a cover of *Room*

Deadline: November 30, 2017

Short Forms

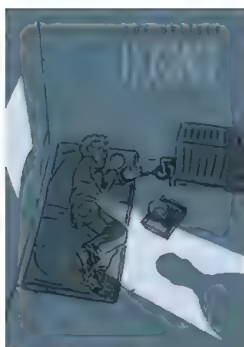
1st Prize: \$500 + publication (two awarded)

Deadline: January 15, 2018

Creative Non-Fiction

1st Prize: \$500 + publication / 2nd Prize: \$250 + publication

Deadline: March 8, 2018



Hostage

Guy Delisle, 432 pgs, Drawn & Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, \$32.95

If you're looking for a high-octane, action-packed, hostage thriller, I would sooner recommend Pierre Morel's 2008 classic *Taken* over Guy Delisle's *Hostage*. If you're instead hungry for a look into the deterioration of human bodies and minds in the face of isolation, alienation, and detainment, Delisle's got you covered.

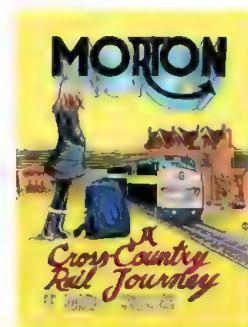
Deslie's graphic novel conveys intimate human experiences in a simple style. From the sparse and beautifully drab

cover to the earliest pages of *Hostage*, this biographical retelling of Christophé Andrew's kidnapping while working for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) glitters with the familiar tension of a devilishly satisfying thriller. And yet, the narrative shifts away from the juicy "real-life" story we may have anticipated from the tantalizing cover and opening page. Instead, we are served a quietly unexpected discussion on the transience of our own agency.

Every page of *Hostage* is rendered completely in damp blues and greys with short streaks of white. Delisle denies any reprieve from the monotony of Christophé's captivity except in short-lived moments of sunlight, a fried egg, new nameless faces, or the tiniest of garlic cloves. How amazing is a garlic clove? For captive Andrew, it's super amazing: "over the next hours, I image every detail of how I'm going to savour this little wonder. My mouth is watering."

Through a minimalist approach in illustration, colour, and text, Delisle molds

our voyeurism into a collective experience: the tortuous collapse of Christophé's psychological and physical health. Delisle's *Hostage* is a well-crafted and arresting account of the kidnapping of Christophé Andrew. This is an engrossing read for fans and new readers alike. (Jean Mathew)

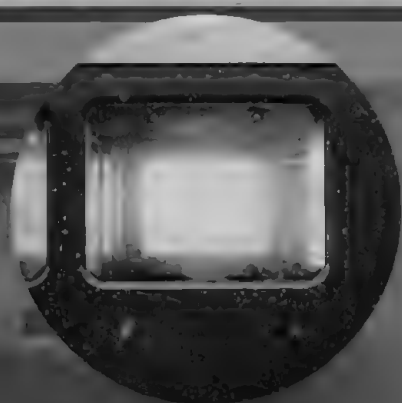


Morton: A Cross-Country Rail Journey

David Collier, 160 pgs, Conundrum Press, conundrumpress.com, \$20

Shaken by the unexpected death of his grandmother, cartoonist David Collier

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brokenpencil ?



Send your pitches to

submissions@brokenpencil.com

The best lies are close to the truth

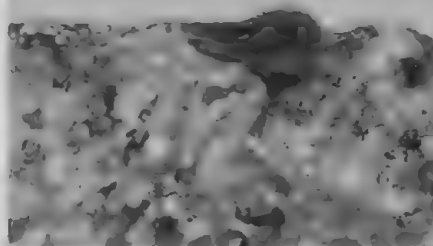
Smells Like Heaven

stones

SALLY COOPER

"In gorgeously evocative prose, Cooper depicts and makes heartbreakingly palpable the evolution of imperfect lives."

—Kelli Deeth
author of *The Other Side of Youth*



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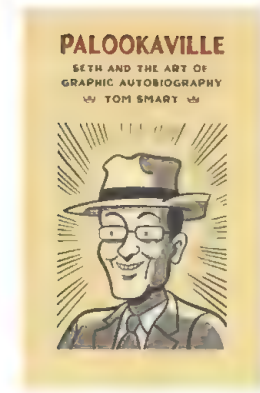
decides to pack up for a month-long train trip across Canada with his partner, Jen, and his young son, James — and to sketch everything that happens along the way.

Like the best road trips, Collier's graphic memoir is slightly hectic. Collier and his family bounce from place to place, from Hamilton to rural Quebec to northern Manitoba — and so does the focus of the narrative. Scenes weave in and out, sometimes flashing by like billboards on the side of the highway without any obvious rationale — an early scene musing on the difficulties of publishing immediately gives way to a brief memory of a friend's lesbian older sister and her prodigal sex life, for example — but the overall effect is to make a reader feel like they're a part of the whirlwind ride.

The undeniable strength of *Morton* is Collier's showcase of unique facets of Canadian life. I found myself learning something about each stop on Collier's trip, thanks to the wealth of historical

information he relays. No CN towers or northern lights here, either — instead, readers visit a mosquito-swarmed sled-dog training facility in Churchill, watch aggressive panhandling on the streets of Winnipeg, and spend a night camping in *Drawn & Quarterly* founder Chris Oliveros' Montreal backyard.

Collier's cross-hatch-heavy, R. Crumb-esque linework is expressive, although it can be inconsistent. He certainly captures the spirit of many of the places he visits, but while some panels are clearly the work of a master cartoonist, others feel rushed. (The cover, for example, is just bizarre.) Thankfully, this never hinders the reader's experience of the trip — *Morton* remains a unique look at the country I thought I knew well. (Kris Bone)



Palookaville:
Seth and the Art of
Graphic Autobiography,
Tom Smart, 96 pgs, *The Porcupine's Quill*,
porcupinesquill.ca, \$16.95

Famed Canadian cartoonist Seth's comic book series, *Palookaville*, has been in progress since 1991, and veteran arts critic Tom Smart had his work cut out for him in trying to find unifying thematic meaning in the entirety of the existing body of work.

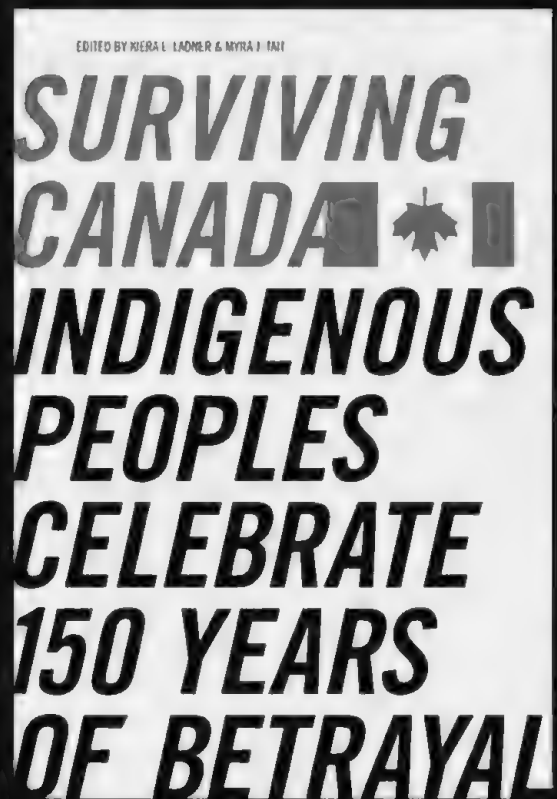
The broken promises of Canada

Through essays and literature, *Surviving Canada* examines the struggle for Indigenous peoples to celebrate their cultures and exercise their right to control their own economic development, lands, water, and lives.

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Though Smart's academic writing in *Palookaville: Seth and the Art of Graphic Autobiography* can, at times, feel a tad overwrought — such as when he describes *Palookaville* as “a kind of urgent, postmodern samizdat wherein Seth can voice his cleverly disguised dystopian warnings” (81) — it is encouraging to see Seth included alongside previous subjects of Smart's critical writing, such as Alex Colville and Mary Pratt.

Seth's draughtsmanship is lovingly reproduced in slick black ink throughout the volume, and it must be said that Smart and The Porcupine's Quill have done an outstanding job in highlighting the qualities that make Seth's art so lasting in the first place.

Smart is very obviously a dedicated fan of Seth's work, and the monograph is not written for the uninitiated. Casual readers may find the text difficult to follow without having read the series itself, but stalwart *Palookaville* followers may well enjoy a more cerebral take on the material.



Seth's Dominion

Luc Chamberland and Seth, 80 pgs,

Drawn & Quarterly,

[drawnandquarterly.com](#), \$32.95

For both casual readers and longtime fans alike, however, *Seth's Dominion* should be required viewing. The recent documentary, directed by Luc Chamberland in association with the National Film Board, is stunning. The film comes packaged in the middle of a double-spined hardcover that alone is worth the price — with one half

providing a lushly reproduced overview of Seth's artistic oeuvre, and the other an illuminating photographic tour through the life that has long informed the cartoonist's work.

The documentary itself, meanwhile, is a sparkling tour of the life of an iconic Canadian artist. While Seth's work is well worth the attention paid to it, Seth himself is a fascinating subject, and Chamberland masterfully weaves interviews, personal history, and animated vignettes together into a gorgeous portrait of the artist's life. As a longtime fan myself, I was worried the documentary would not be as interesting to those who weren't familiar with Seth, but a viewing with a friend confirmed that there is plenty to be had here for just about anyone. Whether you're a fan of cartooning, Canadiana, or just find yourself fascinated by the artistic process, Seth's *Dominion* comes highly recommended. (Kris Bone)

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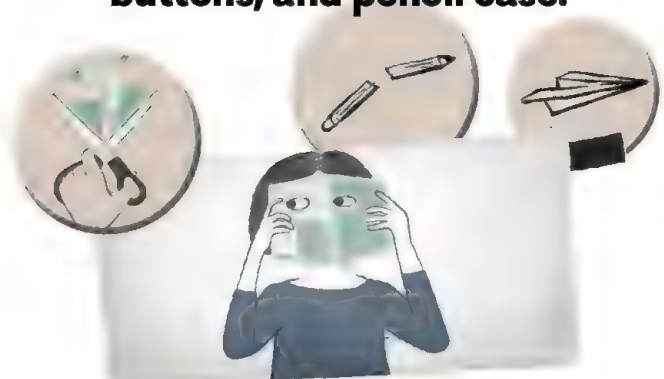
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Yes Yes We're Magicians

Jonah Samson, 112 pgs, Figure 1
Publishing, figure1pub.com, \$35

Fog-shrouded city skylines. Faces, masked and obscured. A dark ship out at sea, its lone stack bleeding black smoke. Jonah Samson's forthcoming collection of found photography, presented in black and white, is — in a word — haunting.

Featuring virtually no accompanying text (with the exception of the titular reference to Samuel Beckett's

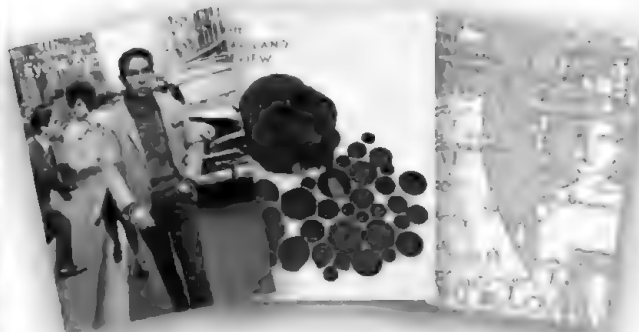
Waiting for Godot), the collection functions like a sort of extended Rorschach test: meaning will drift and change as you make your way through the pages, and connections will emerge, unexpectedly, from the mist. Samson has done a beautiful job of arranging the photographs, all of which were selected from his personal collection — even the individual page layouts speak to the careful thought process that went into the work.

It is impossible to talk about *Yes Yes We're Magicians* without acknowledging the lavish production of the book itself: it's *gorgeous*. The front and back covers are designed to fold out into a single surface so that the reader can appreciate the single image they comprise. The book's exposed binding is carefully stitched and elegant. Even the text on the copyright page seems crisp and intentionally placed. The book's production is sort of like having plush leather seats in a Ferrari: it may not affect performance, but it sure doesn't hurt.

Although it would be easy for a collection of found photography to feel contrived or dully ineffectual, *Yes Yes We're Magicians* manages to strike an impressive balance, being clearly meticulously organized without sacrificing the sense of eerie randomness central to found photography. Though every reader will have a different experience of the book, there is one aspect on which Samson deserves accolades from across the board: making it look so easy. (Kris Bone)

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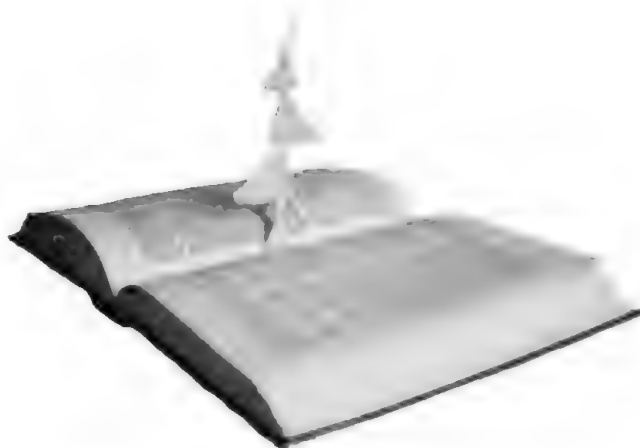
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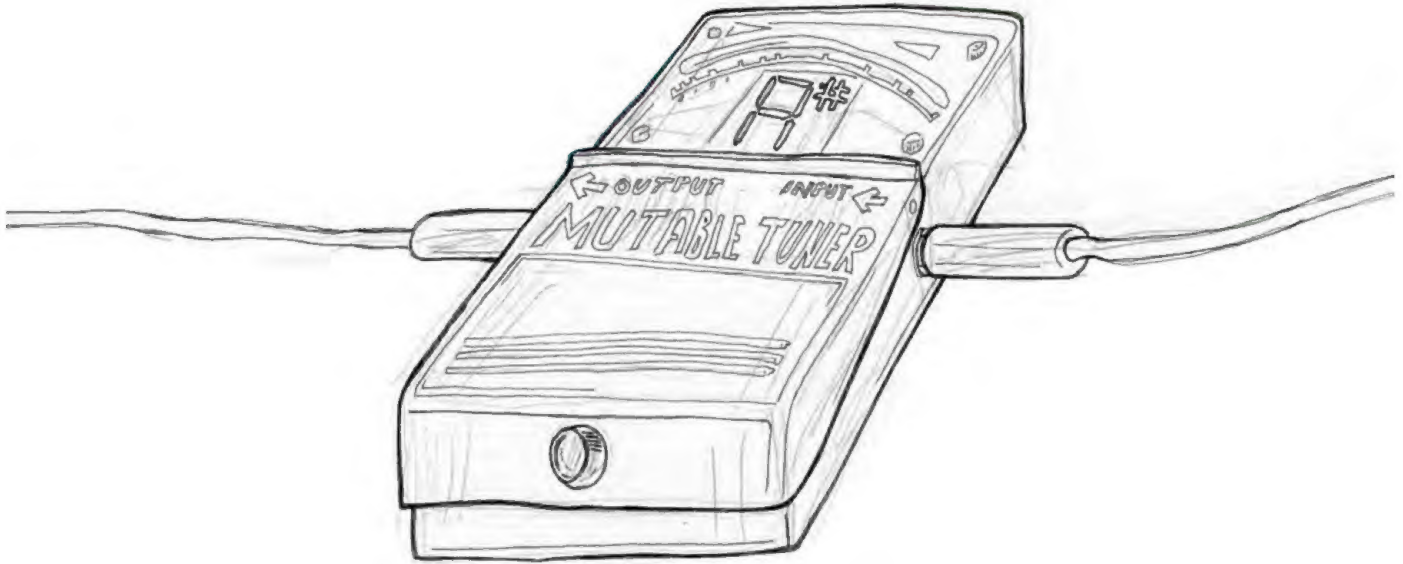
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WHAT'S REALLY IN THE MIND OF A ZINEMAKER?

Return to the Night: Starting a Band When You're Over 35

by Stephanie Johns



HELLO FROM NOT YOU, a four piece rock band from Halifax, NS. This is Stephanie. Here's my advice about how to start a band when you're older (over 35, that special time).

First, it helps if you've played music before, and feel comfortable on a stage and holding and playing an instrument but I don't think this is a requirement. What **IS** a requirement is a mutable tuner. Don't even mess around on this point.

Second, try to fight through the feeling that you should be retired from public nightlife by now and taking care of your kid(s)/face at home (because, like, **IT'S NIGHTTIME** the kid is sleeping, what are you supposed to do, stare at him? That's for months 0-3). You can roast sweet potatoes and make peanut butter and banana sandwiches when you wake up at 6:30am. If someone is hate-staring at you they're just scared of your strength and confidence. Those people are small. You're 10 feet tall. It also is worth remembering the **actual truth** is that no one is even looking or judging you whatsoever, everyone is in their own heads — they're there to hook up, enjoy music, have a fun time. No one is wondering who let their mom in. You deserve to be there! You make things better just by being there, you really do.

I really, truly understand that it's somewhat uncomfortable being the oldest person at the venue. It's enough to bring on some kind of existential questioning — what am I doing here? Why aren't there any other older women here? What are those

women doing instead? Should I also be doing that? But here's the deal: existing in public as a woman nearing **invisibility age** is a political act. Playing music on stage as a woman over 35 is a political act. People will appreciate it. Maybe there's someone else in the audience who would love to do what you're doing and just seeing you gives them a little push!

But there are challenges: It's hard to be spoken to in a really condescending way by a boy in his 20s, and it will definitely happen. ("I'm impressed, those were **REAL** bass lines! I'm a bass player, so I know.") The best tactic is to stare dead into his eyes and say nothing.

Playing music with kind, caring, like-minded people helps. You need a group of people who understand that your life is a living, breathing entity that needs tending. A common goal is good, but a lot of support and understanding is better. And if the other women in the band have kids that are older than yours you will get their sweet hand-me-downs. And the snack assortment is way better.

Organization needs to be up there. Doodle polls help with band practice scheduling so much. It's important not to waste a ton of time (you're busy!) but also remember to take a minute to enjoy the process. I'm sure you work your ass off in every aspect of your life and being in a band **is** hard work, but don't forget that it's fun and you like it.

Obviously wear your earplugs.

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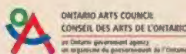
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